Hafa Adai!

Manglona: Impeachment Rules drafted with allegiance to Torres. PAGE 2
McDoulett to serve as Senate special counsel in impeachment proceedings. PAGE 4

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Air Busan keen on Saipan route

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

With the extension of Air Busan's charter flights to Saipan to March 27, the South Korean airline has reportedly expressed an interest in maintaining a regular Busan-Saipan route, as well as accommodating additional flights from Incheon to Saipan.

According to Gloria Cavanagh, Mariana E-Land vice president, the charter that was organized by E-Land's subsidiary, Micronesia Resort Inc.,

See AIR on Page 4

AT A GLANCE

As of 5:45pm, March 1, 2022

VACCINATIONS IN THE CNMI

Eligible Population Additional Dose Vaccinated: 56.9%

Days since last community transmission: 2

Pfizer/BioNTech	
Initiated:	38,029
Fully Vaccinated:	37,170
Moderna	
Initiated:	5,336
Fully Vaccinated:	5,197
Janssen	
Fully vaccinated:	1,140
Additional Dose:	21,245

GUAM	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	44,573	273	44,846
Recovered	41,133	0	41,133
Active	3,110	273	3,383
Deaths	328	2	330

SAIPAN	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	9,595	36	9,550[1]
Recovered	8,638	114	8,752
Active	732	36	768
Deaths	30	0	30

[1]Some duplicates were deleted

Source: Joint Information Center - Guam, Commonwealth Healthcare Corp., https://www.vaccinatecnmi.com/vax-dashboard/

COMMUNITY VULNERABILITY

LEGEND:
- **Red:** Least safe
- **Orange**
- **Yellow**
- **Blue**
- **Green:** Safest

Source: Office of the Governor

CNMI gas prices up another 10 cents

KIMBERLY B. ESMORES

Just two weeks after the last price increase, Mobil Oil Marianas has hiked its prices again by another 10 cents.

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The CNMI continues to see a steady increase in fuel prices with local oil companies raising prices by another 10 cents.

At around 3pm yesterday, Mobil Oil Marianas took the lead by increasing its fuel prices by 10 cents across the board.

Mobil's Extra fuel went up from $ 5.46 a gallon to $5.56. Mobil also hiked its Supreme fuel from $5.91 to $6.01 a gallon. The local oil company also increase its diesel prices to $5.93 per gallon.

Shell Marianas has yet to increase its prices as of 6pm yesterday, but both oil companies usually mirror each other's price changes, so Shell is

See CNMI on Page 4

COVID-19 UPDATE: 8 hospitalized; 36 new cases

As of Feb. 28, 2022, there were eight individuals hospitalized as a result of COVID-19. One is unvaccinated, six are vaccinated, and one is partially vaccinated

Also, 36 additional individuals have been confirmed positive for COVID-19, bringing the CNMI total to 9,550 cases since March 26, 2020. Some duplicates have been deleted.

In Guam, the territory's

See UPDATE on Page 4

NISHIKAWA RETIRES OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Members of the Marianas Visitors Authority board led by chair Viola Alepuyo, second from left, present outgoing Hyatt Regency Saipan Nick Nishikawa, second from right, with a plaque of appreciation at the Hyatt Grand Ballroom to thank him for his 13 years of service in the CNMI. Nishikawa retired from Hyatt last week and Gov. Ralph DLG Torres, the rest of the Governor's Council of Economic Advisers, MVA board members, and members of the business community extended their appreciation to Nishikawa for his steadfast service to the CNMI.

Payroll delay again at IPI

» Around 40 employees affected

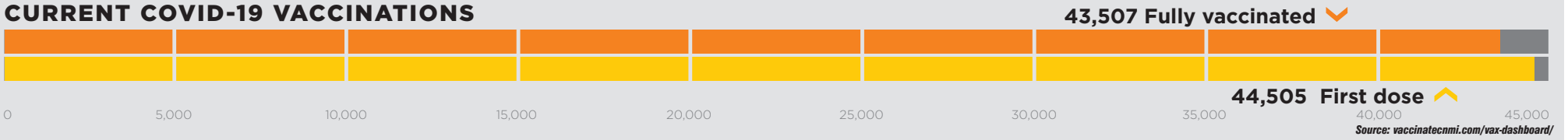
By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Casino operator Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC is facing again a delay in its payroll due to what it describes as "challenges of funding."

In its memorandum the IPI management issued last Friday to active employees, it announced that that day's payroll, covering the Feb. 7 to 20, 2022 pay period, will be de-

See IPI on Page 4

CURRENT COVID-19 VACCINATIONS



Source: vaccinatecnmi.com/vax-dashboard/

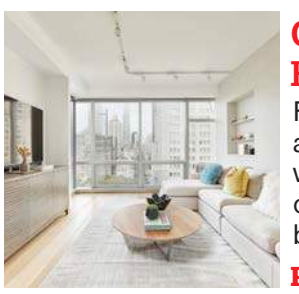
INSIDE

BUSINESS
Russian President Vladimir Putin has achieved what was broken for years—trans-Atlantic unity.

PAGE 11

NATION
Schoolchildren in California, Oregon and Washington will no longer be required to wear masks.

PAGE 12



GOOD HOUSEKEEPING
For those seeking a neutral foundation, winter white may offer the best of both worlds.

PAGE 14

SCAN ME WITH A COMPATIBLE QR READER TO KEEP UPDATED ON ALL THE LATEST NEWS.

Local

Manglona: Impeachment Rules drafted with allegiance to Torres

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Sen. Paul A. Manglona (Ind-Rota) said it is very clear that the Impeachment Rules that the two Senate committees adopted Friday were drafted with allegiance to Gov. Ralph DLG Torres before his trial.

"There is no way that we, the Senate, can hold an unbiased trial with these rules in place," said Manglona in a statement he provided to Saipan Tribune Monday night.

Manglona was supposed to deliver the statement as a member of the public and not as a senator during Monday's Senate's session, but Senate President Jude U. Hofschneider (R-Tinian) did not allow him as the public comment portion was already closed. The microphone at the podium had been turned off just as Manglona was about to deliver his statement.

The special session intended to tackle the Impeachment Rules was abruptly adjourned after Manglona and Sen. Victor B. Hocog (R-Rota) almost came to blows inside the Senate chamber during a recess.

In his statement, Manglona took issue with three points: the Impeachment Rules call for the impeachment committee to hold a pre-hearing' the impeachment proceedings are not intended to be conducted like a criminal trial; and prescribing a standard of proof to use during the impeachment proceedings.

On pre-hearing issue, the senator noted that under the Rules, the impeachment committee, not the whole Senate body, would hold a hearing to make a preliminary determination on the Articles of Impeachment and whether the articles do in fact constitute treason, commission of a felony, corruption or neglect of duty, and whether all elements are satisfied.

"This is the constitutional duty of the whole Senate body, as jurors, after listening to the House of Representatives present their case at the impeachment hearing, and not the duty of a select few, who I might add, are all Republicans," he said.

On how the impeachment proceedings should be intended, Manglona said the purpose of impeachment is not personal punishment, but to protect the public interest rather than impose a punitive measure on an individual.

He said the House functions like a prosecutor's office in terms of presenting evidence of wrongdoing before the Senate.

The senator said the Senate should not dictate who the House prosecutor will be as that is not a decision for the Senate to make. Manglona said the House is a separate entity of this Legislature, and they should have the liberty to decide who will present their case to the Senate.

On the standard of proof matter, he said this standard was not provided for in the impeachment rules for then-governor Benigno R. Fitial.

The senator said jurors in criminal trials are asked to make factual determinations and not convict a defendant unless there is proof of guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

He said in impeachment proceedings, senators, who act as jurors, are making both factual determinations and political judgments.

"This is the most important reason why it is difficult to set a standard of proof in impeachment proceedings," Manglona said.

He said using a judicial proceeding standard is inapplicable and inappropriate in impeachment proceedings because impeachment is, by its nature, a proceeding where the public interest weighs more heavily than the interests of the individual being impeached, in this case the sitting governor.

Manglona said senators should not waver from their duty because of their allegiance to the sitting governor. "Our people demand a fair trial. It is our jobs, as senators, to conduct a fair and impartial hearing," he added.

Manglona, a runner-up in the November 2014 election for a Senate seat for Rota, was appointed in early 2016 to the vacant seat that Hocog left when he (Hocog) ascended to the position of lieutenant governor after the passing of Gov. Eloy S. Inos in December 2015.

Manglona was then the longest serving member of the Legislature after 25 years, thrice as Senate president, until Hocog defeated him in the 2012 elections.

In November 2013, Manglona returned to the Senate after then-acting governor and now Senate president Jude Hofschneider appointed him to the 18th Senate when the CNMI Supreme Court ruled that the successful candidate in the 2012 election—and not in the 2009 polls—should be appointed to the seat vacated by former Rota senator Juan M. Ayuyu.

Manglona won as a senator in the Nov. 3, 2020, election. His current term ends on Jan. 13, 2025.

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$3, 246.89
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A window on your finances,
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GOP board sets deadline for letters of intent

The CNMI Republican Party board met and set the deadline for all interested individuals to submit their letters of intent to their precinct chairs of their respective areas.

Present at the meeting were GOP president Candace Celis, second vice president Shayne Villanueva, GOP secretary Vivian Nogis, GOP treasurer Ray Baza, senior advisor Vince DLG Torres, and campaign chairman Wil Castro. Not present were first vice president Patricia Rasa and senior advisor Rufin Inos.

Letters of intent should be submitted on or before March 18, 2022 to the precinct chairs for House of Representatives. Senators and congressional candidate letters should be sent directly to Celis by email: cnmigop2022@gmail.com

"The GOP is excited to start to accept and endorse candidates. We welcome all of our new and existing candidates," said Celis.

The precinct chairs are:

- Precinct chairman 1: Jack DLG Torres (torres_jack@yahoo.com)
- Precinct chairman 2: Martin Ada (martinborjaada@gmail.com)
- Precinct chairman 3: Jack Ogumoro (jtogumoro@gmail.com)
- Precinct chairman 4: Joe Quitugua (gopcmjq2022@gmail.com)
- Precinct chairman 5: Gil Ada (faisom@gmail.com)

For information on joining the movement to elect Torres-Sablan for governor and lieutenant governor, respectively, and the entire Republican slate, contact Celis at cnmigop2022@gmail.com. ***(PR)***

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Kilili leads effort to adjust how $46M highway program is allocated

Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (Ind-MP) said over the weekend that he is leading an effort with Guam Delegate Michael San Nicolas (D-GU) and American Samoa Delegate Amata Radewagen (R-AS) to have the U.S. Department of Transportation adjust how the $46 million Territorial Highway Program is allocated.

In his e-kilili newsletter, Sablan said DOT announced Thursday the availability of $46 million in federal highway funds for the Marianas, American Samoa, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

He said the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act increased the Territorial Highway Program, though which this money flows, by 14% over the next five years.

The CNMI delegate said the CNMI and American Samoa currently each receive only 10% of the funding. Yet, he said, the new 2020 U.S. Census results find that the CNMI's population is greater than 10% of the total of all four insular areas.

Sablan said by other measures, such as road distance and land area, the current allocation formula also shortchanges the Marianas.

"With a significant amount of new money becoming available, now is the time to reconsider this administrative funding formula that has not changed since 1992," he said. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

CUC ADVISORIES

Power service interruption on March 3 in Koblerville

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. would like to inform the public that there will be a scheduled power service interruption on March 3, 2022, from 9am to 1pm, affecting Figan Ln. in Koblerville.

No water well or wastewater facility will be affected.

This outage is needed to allow CUC to replace a rotted 3-phase primary power pole along Figan Ln. in Koblerville

CUC continues to work diligently to minimize any inconvenience to its customers. For more information, contact the CUC Hotline at 236-4333 or monitor our Facebook page for the latest updates (https://www.facebook.com/CommonwealthUtilitiesCorporation/). ***(PR)***

Scheduled water service interruptions on March 3

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. would like to inform the public that there will be a scheduled water service interruption on March 3, 2022, from 8:30 am to 3:30pm, affecting San Roque, Achugao and Tanapag. CUC said this outage will allow PRV maintenance to ensure the affected areas receive adequate pressures.

Separately, there will also be a scheduled water service interruption from 9am to 1pm affecting portions of Papago, entire San Vicente, Upper Dandan and Obyan. Isolation is needed to repair a 2-inch main service lateral on Laulau Bay Drive.

CUC continues to work diligently to minimize any inconvenience to its customers. For more information, contact the CUC Customer Hotline (236-4333) or monitor our Facebook page for the latest updates (https://www.facebook.com/CommonwealthUtilitiesCorporation/). ***(PR)***

FAC information published in error in yesterday's *Saipan Tribune*

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. would like to notify the public that the Fuel Adjustment Charge, effective March 1, 2022, was erroneously published in yesterday's issue of the *Saipan Tribune* as "911.27122 per kWh." The correct FAC rate is "$0.27122 per kWh," as what was stated in CUC's press release.

CUC has communicated with the *Saipan Tribune* about the error and they have corrected their online edition of the article under "Rise in Fuel Prices Results in FAC Increase." ***(PR)***

Momentary scheduled power service interruption on Friday

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. would like to inform the public that there will be a scheduled power service interruption on March 4, 2022, from 3pm to 3:30pm, affecting customers along Mobil Susupe gas station to the Chalan Kanoa traffic light fronting V-Kool.This will allow CUC to disconnect the overhead primary jumpers along Beach Road near Great Harvest in preparation for the March 5 scheduled power service interruption.

No water well or wastewater facility will be affected.

CUC continues to work diligently to minimize any inconvenience to its customers. For more information, contact the CUC Customer Hotline (236-4333) or monitor our Facebook page for the latest updates (https://www.facebook.com/CommonwealthUtilitiesCorporation/). ***(PR)***

USCG patrols EEZ in partnership with Samoa

HONOLULU—Working with the government of Samoa, crews from the U.S. Coast Guard cutter *Juniper* (WLB 201) and USCGC *Joseph Gerczak* (WPC 1126) conducted security patrol operations in Samoa's exclusive economic zone throughout February to protect fisheries and other natural resources.

The *Juniper* and *Joseph Gerczak* crews helped fill the operational presence needed to deter illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing while Samoa's *Nafanua II* patrol boat is down.

"We always look forward to assisting our partners in the region," said Cmdr. Jeff Bryant, the 14th District's chief of enforcement. "The United States offered to assist the government of Samoa by providing security and sovereignty operations in Samoan waters due to the absence of their patrol boat."

The cutters have been underway in Oceania supporting Operation Aiga, designed to integrate Coast Guard capabilities and operations with the United States' Pacific Island Country partners in order to effectively and efficiently protect shared national interests, combat IUU fishing and strengthen maritime governance on the high seas.

As a trusted partner in the Pacific, the Coast Guard employs 11 bilateral shiprider agreements with Pacific Island Forum nations, like Samoa, to support resource security and fisheries enforcement. These agreements enabled the Coast Guard to aid host-nation sovereignty while patrolling Samoa's EEZ.

The U.S. Coast Guard and the government of Samoa have a history of partnership. In 2019, the Coast Guard cutters *Walnut* and *Joseph Gerczak* visited Apia Harbor and conducted patrol operations with officials from Samoa's Ministry of Police and Ministry of Fisheries on board. In 2021, the crew of the CGC Oliver Berry conducted similar patrols while Samoa's patrol boat underwent repairs.

"Operation Aiga is named that for a reason. *Aiga* means family in Samoan and that's how we view our Pacific neighbors," said U.S. Ambassador to Samoa Tom Udall. "This is real partnership. Together we can stop those who seek to steal valuable resources that simply don't belong to them."

With a population of approximately 40 million people covering an area of 3.3 million square miles, the Coast Guard and its international partners regularly patrol Oceania to protect and support those who call it home. ***(USCG)***

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McDoulett to serve as Senate special counsel in impeachment proceedings

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Senate has hired former Federal Bureau of Investigation special agent Joe McDoulett as its special counsel in the impeachment proceedings against Gov. Ralph DLG Torres.

Babauta

McDoulett was present at the Senate's special session Monday and also during the Senate's two joint committees' meeting Friday.

At the Senate special session's public comment portion Monday, Rep. Celina R. Babauta (D-Saipan) denounced the proposed Impeachment Rules adopted by the Senate Committee of Executive Appointments and Governmental Investigations, and the Senate Committee on Judiciary, Government, Law and Federal Relations.

Babauta said these proposed rules are not congruent with the applicable statutes and a "complete betrayal" of the CNMI Constitution.

She said the fact that a special counsel was specifically hired to draft up these rules and personally participated as the joint committee's counsel during their meeting Friday instead of the two in-house Senate lawyers is "contradictory to and is a betrayal" of the CNMI Constitution.

She said there is no ambiguity in the Constitution that the Legislative Bureau counsel never be replaced by a private attorney in its role of assisting any Senate committee and private counsel should not be utilized as the official counsel in any official Senate or committee meeting.

Babauta said even during the hearings of the House Judiciary and Governmental Operations Committee that she chairs, they respected the Constitution and used only the House legal counsel and no one else.

"The question I ask is, who is providing direct or indirect funding for special counsel Joe McDoulett? Is it the governor? The mayor of Tinian? Or the Senate leadership?" she asked.

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

SCC membership meeting today

The Saipan Chamber of Commerce will have its general membership meeting today, March 2, 2022, at the Hyatt Regency Saipan's Regency Ballroom, from 11:30am to 1pm.

The Northern Marianas Technical Institute will be making a presentation led by NMTech CEO Jodina Attao and her team on the progress and overview of courses, trainings, and programs at the institute.

The Business Person of the Year platinum sponsor A&P LLC (AP Group) will also be making a presentation on who they are and what they do. ***(PR)***

2021 tax forms available online

The Department of Finance, Division of Revenue & Taxation would like to notify the public that the 2021 income tax forms are now available online at www.dof.gov.mp/forms. The due date for filing of returns is Monday, April 18, 2022. For more forms and instructions please visit www.irs.gov or consult with a tax professional.

Available 2021 tax forms

- 2021 1040CM
- 2021 1120CM
- 2021 1120F-CM
- 2021 Schedule 1CM
- 2021 Schedule ETC (1040CM)
- 2021 Schedule WSD (1040CM)

IPI

From Page 1

layed until further notice due to the challenges of funding.

As of yesterday, *Saipan Tribune* learned that IPI has yet to issue paychecks to about 40 employees.

IPI said the company continues to face financial hardships since the closure of Imperial Pacific Resort in Garapan in March 2020.

"We are working to find resources to cure this delay. We send our sincerest apologies to you for this inconvenience," the IPI memorandum said.

The company said updates will be announced when developments are made.

Meanwhile, a source disclosed that Commonwealth Casino Commission executive director Andrew Yeom is looking into a tip from a concerned citizen that IPI has not remitted a former employee's U.S. Social Security withholding for two years.

The former employee inquired from then-IPI chief executive officer Ray N. Yumul last January about his W2 showing Social Security taxes being deducted but not being credited to him on the Social Security website.

Yumul told *Saipan Tribune* over the weekend that he received a response from the U.S. Social Security office regarding the former employee's concern about his withholdings.

Yumul said any current or former employee who may have concerns about their wage withholdings not being remitted may simply need to provide a photocopy of their W2 for the affected period and a copy of their driver's license.

He said the employee must place the documents in a sealed envelope and drop it at the local Social Security Office at the Mariana Heights 2 Building in Puerto Rico and the person will be credited their withholdings.

Yumul said that Bridget Camacho, who is with the local U.S. Social Security office, provided him the response.

Yumul did receive an email from the same concerned former employee while he was still IPI's CEO. Yumul's resignation from IPI took effect on Feb. 1, 2022.

UPDATE

From Page 1

number of COVID-19-related fatalities was adjusted to reflect two additional cases.

In addition to one new fatality, one death reported from 2021 has been reclassified, bringing Guam's current COVID-19-related death count to 330.

A Joint Information Center news release yesterday stated that Guam's Department of Public Health and Social Services' chief medical officer and territorial epidemiologist, in coordination with the acting chief medical examiner, have been conducting a review of all possible COVID-19-related deaths, resulting in the reclassification of one death in 2021.

Guam's 329th COVID-19-related fatality was pronounced dead on arrival at U.S. Naval Hospital on Feb. 10, 2022. The patient was a 39-year-old male, unvaccinated, with unknown underlying health conditions who tested positive on February 10.

The 330th COVID-19-related fatality occurred at the Guam Memorial Hospital last Oct. 31, 2021. The patient was a 46-year-old male, fully vaccinated without a booster shot, with unknown underlying health conditions who tested positive on Oct. 29, 2021.

The JIC news release quoted Guam Gov. Lou Leon Guerrero as saying: "With each passing from COVID-19 we are reminded that we are not yet out of the woods. For those who have experienced grief and sadness from losing a loved one, Jeff [Cook], Josh [Tenorio], and I extend our deepest sympathies. Please continue the public health interventions that have helped us progress through this pandemic. Wear your mask, wash your hands, watch your distance, and get boosted and vaccinated. If you're feeling sick or are concerned you may have been exposed, testing is open to all and lifesaving treatments are available to get better faster."

Of the 36 new cases identified in the CNMI last Feb. 27, 2022, two were identified on Tinian and three on Rota. The vaccination statuses of the 36 cases are pending verification.

Of the total number of cases that have been identified in the CNMI, as of Feb. 27, 2022, there have been 8,752 recoveries; 768 active cases; and 30 COVID-19-related deaths. Of all these cases, 8,901 were identified via community testing and 649 via travel testing.

A total of 67 COVID-19 vaccine shots were administered on Feb. 28, 2022; of the eligible population, 56.9% have already received an additional dose. The vaccination rate is calculated using the 2020 Census population estimates for the CNMI and includes the eligible 5-years-old and older population.

A total of 77 COVID-19 tests were conducted on Feb. 27, 2022: 25 via Community-Based Testing; 44 the at Koblerville COVID-19 Community Center; and eight at the Rota Health Center

Individuals who test positive for COVID-19 should stay home and isolate when they are sick (except to get medical care), even if they do not have symptoms; rest; stay hydrated; can take over-the-counter medicines, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen, to relieve symptoms; and live COVID-19 safe.

Individuals experiencing COVID-19 symptoms should stay home and live COVID-19 safe (except to get medical care or get tested for COVID-19). Other options include seeing their health care provider or calling the CHCC Tele-Triage hotline at (670) 233-2067. For a guidebook on how to live COVID-19 safe, visit www.staysafecnmi.com/livecovidsafe.

The Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. continues to encourage the community to get vaccinated if they have not done so, or get their booster shot if they are eligible to help prevent severe illness, hospitalization, or death. People considered high risk (e.g., history of diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity, or cancer, or over the age of 65), immunocompromised persons, or unvaccinated individuals are at risk of serious illness from COVID-19. Unvaccinated individuals spread the virus at a higher rate than vaccinated individuals, thereby increasing the spread and risk of serious illness toward other unvaccinated individuals.

Stay up to date with your COVID-19 vaccination, which includes additional doses for individuals who are immunocompromised or booster doses for those who are eligible. Register for COVID-19 vaccines at www.vaccinatecnmi.com, or call (670) 682-7468.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

CNMI

From Page 1

expected to impose the same increase today.

Multiple motorists share their fears as the CNMI inches closer to the $6 mark in fuel prices.

According one motorist, she fears that prices won't get better anytime soon.

"With the international conflict in Ukraine escalating, I fear we're far from seeing relief in terms of oil prices. What I'm most worried about is how this steady increase is going to affect our electricity," she said.

Another motorist echoed the woman's sentiment stating that fuel increases don't just affect transportation, but our way of life.

"I've already had to minimize my energy consumption because of the increase in the [Fuel Adjustment Charge] due to the continuous increase in gas prices and I'm sure I'm not the only one. This doesn't just impact our daily transportation. This means inflation in the cost of power. With our economy not even back at 100% due to COVID, how will many of the local residents afford power if this trend continues?" he said.

In related news, the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. announced on Monday that it will be increasing its Fuel Adjustment Charge, effective yesterday, March 1, to $0.27122 per kilowatt-hour.

The FAC is one of two components that make up the CUC electric kWh rate, which is used to purchase fuel. The second component is the CUC base rate, which is used to fund operations, projects, and debt service. This base rate has not been increased since April 17, 2014.

AIR

From Page 1

may not have had the outcome they had hoped for, but it was successful in other ways.

The charter flights were supposed to last only from Jan. 23 to Feb. 27, but Cavanagh explained that through the charter, MRI was able to entice Air Busan to continue servicing the Saipan route.

"We had hoped for a better turnout. Because it was a weekly flight only, it was cost-challenging for the consumer. However, we believe it was successful in other ways. By doing this charter, we were able to convince Air Busan not to give up their already approved route to Saipan," she said.

The E-Land vice president said Air Busan has expressed an interest in flying the Saipan route twice a week, even possibly adding two Incheon flights to its regular schedule.

"We also believe that this led Air Busan to express their interest in continued service to Saipan in a twice weekly flight pattern from Busan. They have also expressed interest in adding two flights from Incheon. This can possibly mean four weekly Air Busan flights for Saipan," Cavanagh said.

Cavanagh said this opens an opportunity for the CNMI to be exposed to residents of Busan—exposure the CNMI hasn't had in years.

"Air Busan had also put out much money and effort to promote the Marianas. They promoted the Marianas on their social network services, website, as well as offline on billboards and radio ads. We have not had a flight from the Busan area in a couple of years. We hope for ourselves, as well as the whole of the CNMI economy, that there will be an expansion of interest in this area," she said.

On behalf of E-Land, Cavanagh said she thanks the Marianas Visitors Authority and the Tourism Resumption Investment Program for their help in getting new airlines to partner with the CNMI.

"We want to thank MVA and the Korea TRIP program for the support. In this COVID environment, it is nearly impossible to add new airlines to serve our destination. We hope that this will lead to a long and successful partnership," she said.

Air Busan is a budget carrier unit of Asiana Airlines Inc. that started providing air service to Saipan at the end of January via six scheduled charter flights.

Currently, Air Busan only offers flights on two international routes: from the southern port city of Busan to Qingdao in China, and from Busan to Saipan.

It was learned that the airline previously provided a Busan-Guam flight but dropped Guam after establishing a charter with Saipan pursuant to the travel bubble arrangement the CNMI has with South Korea.

Right now, Air Busan flies to Saipan every Sunday until March 27.

Bill to create separate license for online sales of beverages vetoed

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Citing great ambiguities noted by Attorney General Edward Manibusan, Gov. Ralph DLG Torres has vetoed a bill that seeks to create a separate license for online sales of alcoholic beverages.

Torres informed the Legislature that in Manibusan's comments on the measure, House Bill 22-55, HS1, he expressed several serious concerns regarding the bill's failure to address the need to establish an effective enforcement regime to ensure that liquor purchased online does not fall in the hands of those under 21 years of age, as door-to-door delivery would be permitted.

"I share the AG's apprehensions in this regard," Torres said.

The bill, authored by Rep. Leila Staffler (D-Saipan), intends to establish a new category of liquor licensing under the statutory code to allow online sales of alcoholic beverages.

The governor reiterated Manibusan's comment that "online liquor sales should be subject to the same, if not more stringent licensing system, given the nature of e-commerce business and the operational costs and difficulties of monitoring compliance."

Torres

Staffler

The AG said the bill calls for a self-policing system based on the assumption that most licenses will comply with the restrictions. Manibusan said such a system typically relies on hefty penalties and monetary fines as a deterrence against non-compliance.

The AG said the bill does not provide for any enhanced enforcement provisions beyond what is already provided by statute.

In fact, Manibusan said, it is not entirely clear whether the penalties and sanctions provided for in the Commonwealth Code will apply to an Online Sale Licensee who fails to comply with the restrictions set forth in each of those sections in the statute. He further stated that no mention is made whether the penalty provisions in the subsequent subsections in the statute will apply to a non-compliant Online Sale Licensee. The AG said the absence of such language is significant.

Manibusan said that, without an articulated rational, the bill will create a double standard of enforcement that differentiates between non-online liquor sale licensees and online liquor sale licensees.

In vetoing the bill, Torres requested the Legislature to take steps to address the ambiguities in the legislation, referencing compliance with existing provisions of the alcoholic beverage control statutes.

DFEMS officers attend 'live fire' training in US

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
The four Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services firefighters are joined by one of their trainers in this photo.

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services sent off four of its officers to take part in various "live fire" trainings in different fire training facilities in the United States.

The four DFEMS firefighters—Captain John Concepcion and firefighters Albert Aldan, Maynard Duenas, and Soane Pua—visited fire training facilities in New York, New Jersey, and Southern Louisiana to attend active "live fire" trainings.

The last stop in the group's over two-week-long training was Louisiana. While there, the firefighters visited the training sites in Bayou Cane, Little Caillou, and Thibodaux fire departments where they acquired valuable information and resources for the fire service disciplines of hazardous materials handling, technical and advanced vehicle rescue and firefighting, and fire suppression.

The four DFEMS personnel rounded out their fact-finding and training missions last Tuesday night when they spent several hours inside a live fire trainer where actual flames traveled over the top of their heads in 1,200 degrees Fahrenheit conditions.

In addition to the training opportunities, Concepcion, Pua, Aldan, and Duenas were able to get a firsthand view of the similarities between the devastation caused by previous super typhoons in the CNMI and Hurricane Ida that wreaked havoc in Louisiana.

The group is set to return to Saipan this week.

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THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

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No writing work experience? We are willing to train! Email your application and résumé to Mia Carreon at mia_carreon@tanholdings.com or drop them off at the HR office on the second floor of the JP Center building in Garapan, Saipan.

Kilili, Babauta, Perez support 5-year review of planned Marianas National Marine Sanctuary

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (Ind-MP), Rep. Sheila J. Babauta (D-Saipan) and 500 Sails Inc. founder Emma Perez have expressed support for the five-year review of the proposed National Marine Sanctuary in the Mariana Islands.

In a joint comment submitted Monday to Kristina Kekuewa, the Pacific Islands regional director for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, Sablan, Babauta, and Perez said they have reviewed the nomination and believe that the region continues to meet the criteria as a potential sanctuary.

"We ask that the proposed national marine sanctuary remain in the inventory," they said.

The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries of the NOAA has requested written comments to facilitate ONMS' five-year review of the nomination for the Mariana Trench National Marine Sanctuary at the five-year interval.

Following this information gathering and internal analysis, NOAA will make a final determination whether or not the Marianas Trench NMS nomination will remain in the inventory for another five-year period. The deadline for public comments was Feb. 22, 2022.

In response to Saipan Tribune's request for comments on the matter, Babauta, who chairs the House of Representatives Natural Resources Committee, said she supports science, research, and education.

Babauta said that keeping the Marianas on the inventory as a potential National Marine Sanctuary will provide additional resources needed for the CNMI to explore and study the waters around it, "so we can better protect and conserve our ocean and cultural practices for future generations."

The lawmaker said so much "fake news" has been spreading about this step in the process and that it's very harmful and quite scary.

"The fact is, right now NOAA is only asking whether or not we should keep it on the inventory. That's it," she said.

Babauta said if the CNMI is chosen for designation, that would be a completely different process and it would take several years because they are required by law to heavily involve the community and conduct outreach and education.

Babauta coordinated the Environmental Sustainability and Stewardship Stakeholders working group to address issues that impact the lands and waters of the CNMI.

Participants of the working group include the members of the House committee, Executive Branch offices, local and national non-government organizations, federal agencies, local businesses, scientists, and concerned citizens.

Sablan, Babauta, and Perez said that, as official representatives of their respective agencies and organizations, they look forward to beginning the community consultations to support the designation of the sanctuary, and commit to engaging and partnering with federal partners to support implementation, to best benefit the community.

They encouraged the Biden administration to prioritize moving the sanctuary forward toward designation.

Sablan, Babauta, and Perez said this indigenous-led sanctuary can play a critical role in the America the Beautiful Initiative, and will play a globally significant role in achieving designating and implementing 30% of the ocean in marine protected areas and other effective conservation measures.

The three support the three recommendations put forward by the Friends of the Mariana Trench, the original nominators of the national marine sanctuary.

First, they said, they support making no substantive changes to the CNMI's nomination, but request to amend the proposed name.

"Our waters are home to the iconic Mariana Trench, the deepest trench in the world's ocean. This is something to be proud of, and we want to include it and keep it in our nomination," they said.

Sablan, Babauta, and Perez said they, however, would like to bring greater attention to the stewardship of the people who have called this place home for more than 4,000 years ago and that they suggest that the name reflect the CNMI's heritage.

Second, the three stressed the importance of co-management for the proposed national marine sanctuary. They asked that during the designation process, the proper CNMI government agencies and/or indigenous representatives are included in both management, decision making, and advisory roles.

Finally, Sablan, Babauta, and Perez emphasized that they are not proposing any additional restrictions for small fishing vessels homeported in Guam, Saipan, Tinian, or Rota, nor do they think their proposal will affect any existing commercial offshore fisheries. They do, however, want to address foreign and illegal fishing with the sanctuary.

They preferred that the proposed borders of the sanctuary emerge with extensive community engagement during the process of designation.

In recent years, surveys, tagging and acoustic studies have documented that the Marianas region is a highway for migrating species, including humpback whales who summer in Russia and Alaska, whale sharks who traverse the Pacific rim from Central America, and sea turtles, who nest and spend their first decades around the islands before migrating across the globe.

Sablan, Babauta, and Perez said the highest diversity of coral specifies in U.S. waters occurs in the Marianas, and these resources serve as a multi-million-dollar attraction to overseas tourists who will be critical for economic recovery once the COVID-19 pandemic ends.

NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION
Community Development Block Grant - Disaster Recovery
(CDBG-DR) Program

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

NMHC JVA NO.	Positions:	Salary:	Opening Date	Closing Date
2022-011	CDBG-DR Loan Specialist (1-Position)	UNGRADED $25,000.00 to $30,000.00 per annum	March 02, 2022	March 17, 2022 4:00 PM
2022-013	CDBG-DR Project Supervisor (1-Position)	UNGRADED$35,000.00 to $45,000.00 per annum	March 02, 2022	March 17, 2022 4:00 PM
2022-014	CDBG-DR Construction Inspector – Tinian Field Office (1-Position)	UNGRADED $25,000.00 to $30,000.00 per annum	March 02, 2022	March 17, 2022 4:00 PM

Employment application form, detailed job description, qualification requirements and other information can be accessed at www.nmhcgov.net and www.cnmi-cdbgdr.com.

Applicants may submit their applications through the following options: Submission at the NMHC Central Office in Garapan, Saipan; Drop Box located in front of the NMHC Central Office building; the CDBG-DR Office located on the 3rd Floor of the Ladera Building, Chalan Laulau, Beach Road; or email application and documents to officemanager@nmhcgov.net.

All applicants must complete and submit the NMHC Employment Application Form together with required documents that are listed in the Employment Application Package. Failure to provide the required documents will result in automatic disqualification. NMHC and all its properties are drug-free zones; therefore, selected applicant will be subject to pre- employment drug screening.

It is the policy of the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC) that the merit system will be applied and administered according to the principle of equal opportunity for all citizens and nationals as defined by its personnel regulations and the Northern Marianas Commonwealth Constitution regardless of age, race, sex, religion, political affiliation or belief, marital status, disability or place of origin.

For inquiries, please contact Mr. Jacob Muna, Office Manager, at (670) 234-6866/9447 or by email to officemanager@nmhcgov.net. NMHC is a fair housing agency and an equal opportunity provider, lender and employer.

/s/
JESSE S. PALACIOS
Corporate Director

COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY
MAIN OFFICE: SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, 2ND FLOOR ARRIVAL BLDG.
PO BOX 501055•SAIPAN•MP•96950
PHONE: (1-670) 237-6500/1 | FAX: (1-670) 234-5962
E-MAIL ADDRESS: CPA.ADMIN@PTICOM.COM | WEBSITE: WWW.CNMIPORTS.COM

INVITATION FOR BIDS
SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
SOLID WASTE COLLECTION SERVICES

PROJECT NO. CPA-IFB-002-22

The Commonwealth Ports Authority (CPA) is soliciting sealed bids for ***Solid Waste Collection Services*** for the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The ***bid package*** containing all the specifications, date of pre-bid meeting, and other requirements will be available at the Accounting Office, Commonwealth Ports Authority, Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport, 2nd Floor of the Departure Building beginning ***March 02, 2022*** upon payment of ***$50.00*** in cash, cashiers check or credit card. All responses to this IFB shall take into account any costs that will be charged to the bidder awarded the contract for the project. Bidders shall also take into consideration all necessary badging requirements and fees for this project.

Bids will be received at the office of the Executive Director, 2nd Floor, Arrival Building, Saipan International Airport until ***2:00 PM LOCAL TIME, Friday, April 01, 2022.*** Bids are to be submitted in a sealed envelope clearly marked: ***"Bid for Solid Waste Collection Services at the Saipan International Airport, Project No. CPA-IFB-002-22".*** Bidders are to submit one (1) original and three (3) copies.

The Commonwealth Ports Authority reserves the right to reject any or all bids submitted for: (a) any of the reasons set forth in this Invitation For Bids; or (b) any of the reasons set forth in the CPA Procurement Rules and Regulations regarding bid rejection or cancellation; or (c) sufficient justification exists that awarding the project contract would not be in the best interest of CPA.

FOR THE COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY

CHRISTOPHER S. TENORIO
Executive Director

Date

CNMI DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

PUBLIC NOTICE

The CNMI Department of Commerce, Central Statistics Division is preparing to conduct the CNMI 2022 Prevailing Wage Study (PWS) survey to begin on March 01, 2022 and notifies all businesses and employers in the CNMI to log on to the CSD Data Collection Portal and complete the PWS survey questionnaire.

All businesses and employers, with and with no employees, are urged to complete this survey before March 15, 2022.

Data Collection Portal Link:
http://cnmidata.commerce.gov.mp/

Fermina Tobias Martinez
P.O. Box 7481 SVRB
Saipan, MP 96950
Phone: 785-4777

Pro Se

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

In the Matter of the Petition for the Change of Name of: Femina Tobias Martinez Petitioner : FCD CN CIVIL ACTION NO. 22-0079 : NOTICE OF HEARING

Notice is hereby given that the above-entitled matter is set for a hearing on June 13, 2022 at 9:00 a.m. in Courtroom 217A, before Associate Judge Teresa Kim-Tenorio.

Dated this 25th day of February, 2022.

Patrick V. Diaz
Clerk of Court

/s/ Deputy Clerk of Court

NAVFAC Marianas manages Tinian divert airfield construction projects

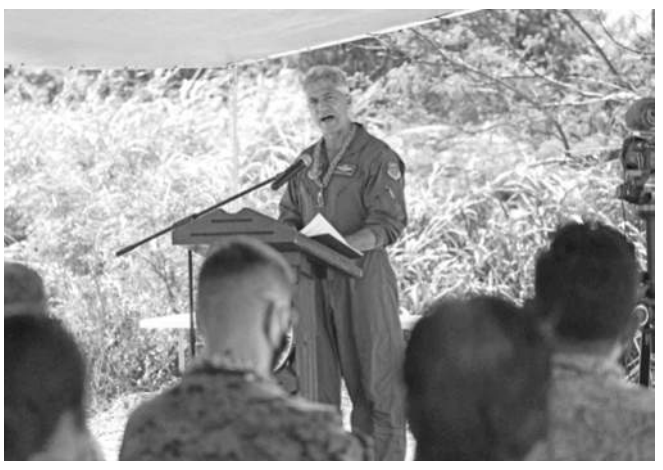
By JOANNA DELFIN
NAVAL FACILITIES ENGINEERING COMMAND PACIFIC

ASAN, Guam—With the lift of a shovel, the U.S. Department of Defense and the CNMI government broke ground on the first two projects for the Tinian Divert Airfield Tuesday last week.

Capt. Tim Liberatore Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command Marianas commanding officer, and Joint Region Marianas regional engineer, highlighted the projects that include airfield development and a parking apron totaling nearly $162 million, with an expected completion date of October 2025.

"These military construction projects that we break ground on today represent the first of several capital investments in the CNMI," he said. "These projects are also a testament of the continued partnership between the DOD and the CNMI as we work together to ensure security in the region."

U.S. NAVY/JOANNA DELFIN
Leadership from the U.S. Department of Defense and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands break ground on the first two projects for the Tinian Divert Airfield during a ceremony Feb. 22.



U.S. NAVY/JOANNA DELFIN
Brig. Gen. Jeremy Sloane, commander, 36th Wing, delivers remarks during the Tinian Divert groundbreaking ceremony Feb. 22.

U.S. NAVY/JOANNA DELFIN
Capt. Tim Liberatore, commander, Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command (NAVFAC) Marianas, provides opening remarks during the Tinian Divert Airfield groundbreaking ceremony Feb. 22.

NAVFAC Marianas is the construction agent who will provide construction management and contracting services and support to ensure the timely and quality completion of the projects before it is turned over to the U.S. Air Force.

"Its airfield, roadway, port, and pipeline improvements will provide vital strategic, operational, and exercise capabilities for the U.S. forces and support humanitarian assistance and disaster relief," said Brig Gen. Jeremy Sloane, commander, 36th Wing. "The Air Force is committed to a safe Tinian, a prosperous CNMI, and a collaborative region as well as preserving Tinian's natural and historical resources for future generations."

Rear Adm. Benjamin Nicholson, commander, Joint Region Marianas, said the divert is an important part the nation's defense as new pacing challenges have emerged in the region, calling for the need to strengthen our defenses, forces and partnerships.

"From now into the future, this airfield will enhance our ability to meet mission requirements, broaden our defense strategies, and expand our capabilities for training and operations," he said. "Today is yet another bold step we take for the defense of this region, and we could not do it without you, our friends and partners in the CNMI."

USCIS reaches fiscal year 2022 H-1B cap

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services has received a sufficient number of petitions needed to reach the congressionally mandated 65,000 H-1B visa regular cap and the 20,000 H-1B visa U.S. advanced degree exemption, known as the master's cap, for fiscal year 2022.

We have completed sending non-selection notifications to registrants' online accounts. The status for registrations properly submitted for the fiscal year 2022 H-1B numerical allocations, but that were not selected, will now show:

Not Selected: Not selected—not eligible to file an H-1B cap petition based on this registration.

We will continue to accept and process petitions that are otherwise exempt from the cap. Petitions filed for current H-1B workers who have been counted previously against the cap, and who still retain their cap number, are exempt from the FY 2022 H-1B cap. We will continue to accept and process petitions filed to:

Extend the amount of time a current H-1B worker may remain in the United States;

Change the terms of employment for current H-1B workers;

Allow current H-1B workers to change employers; and

Allow current H-1B workers to work concurrently in additional H-1B positions.

U.S. businesses use the H-1B program to employ foreign workers in specialty occupations. We encourage H-1B petitioners to subscribe to the H-1B cap season email updates located on the H-1B Cap Season page. ***(USCIS)***

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality
Division of Coastal Resources Management
P.O. Box 501304, Saipan, MP 96950
Tel: (670) 664-8300; Fax: (670) 664-8315
www.dcrm.gov.mp

Eli D. Cabrera
Administrator

Richard V.Salas
Director, DCRM

NOTICE OF CRM PUBLIC HEARING

RESOURCES MANAGEMENT INTERNATIONAL CORPORATION (RMIC) RESUMPTION OF ROCK CRUSHING AND ROCK QUARRY OPERATIONS PERMIT APPLICATION NO. SMS-2022-015

The Division of Coastal Resources Management (DCRM) will be holding a public hearing for the proposed resumption of RMIC's Rock Crushing and Rock Quarry Operations project at As Matuis, Saipan.

Resources Management International Corporation (RMIC) is proposing to resume the rock crushing and rock quarry operations. The project includes extracting raw corals and limestone materials. The project site is situated on public land identified as Lot No. 069 A 01, measuring approximately 20,000 square meters.

The public hearing for this project is scheduled on **Tuesday, March 15, 2022, at 5:00PM**, at the **BECQ 2nd Floor Main Conference Room, Gualo Rai Center, Middle Road, Lower Gualo Rai, Saipan.**

Due to the ongoing threat of COVID-19 and to ensure the health and safety of all, virtual public participation is highly encouraged via video conferencing through Zoom link: hhtps://zoom.us/j (Meeting ID: 6706648315). Our Zoom meeting access code may change, please call the DCRM Permitting Office at (670) 664-8300 for connection assistance at least one-day prior to the public hearing date.

If you are unable to attend, written comments can be submitted to the DCRM Office, Suite 305, Gualo Rai Center, Middle Road, Gualo Rai, Saipan, or mailed to the Division of Coastal Resources Management, P.O. Box 501304, or sent by fax at 664-8315, or by email at ssablan@dcrm.gov.mp. The project files are open for review and comments during regular business hours from 7:30 A.M. – 4:30 P.M., Monday through Friday. All written and oral comments received by DCRM will be included as part of the permit application records and will be considered in any decisions concerning the proposed projects. Please contact the DCRM at 664-8300/1 if you have any questions or would like to learn more about the RMIC Rock Crushing and Rock Quarry Operations project.

/s/ Richard V. Salas
Director
Division of Coastal Resources Management

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
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Jayvee L. Vallejera EDITOR
jayvee_vallejera@saipantribune.com

Mark Rabago ASSOCIATE EDITOR
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com

MEMBER

The Associated Press | Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

It's past time to create a federal no-fly list for misbehaving passengers

Even in an era in which some politicians defend the insurrectionists who attacked the Capitol and side with parents who disrupt school board meetings, surely the whole political spectrum can get together on the issue of belligerent airline passengers who literally endanger lives with in-flight meltdowns induced by anti-mask sentiment, alcohol or whatever. Tolerance for such behavior should be lower than zero.

Yet as it stands now, passengers who get themselves banned from one airline can generally slip onto a flight on another carrier because there's no industrywide no-fly list for disruptive passengers. Congress and the industry can and should change that.

Future historians and psychologists will be kept busy pondering why so many otherwise reasonable Americans seemed to toss civility aside and lose their heads in all kinds of ways these past few years. Was it some virulent strain of cabin fever brought on by the restrictions of the pandemic? Whatever the cause, many lately have decided that outright belligerence toward their fellow Americans —and especially toward authority in its many forms —is (to borrow a phrase in the news lately) legitimate political discourse. It's not. And when it happens in a pressurized cabin at 35,000 feet, it's potentially life-threatening.

By now, reports of airline passengers behaving badly should ring sadly familiar. All the major carriers have seen unprecedented spikes in confrontations between passengers and crew, or passengers and each other. Mask requirements on the flights appear to account for the majority of conflicts, which is outrageous, given that passengers know about those requirements when they board. At that moment, the issue is no longer about masks but about following the in-flight rules as set by aviation authorities consistent with federal law. Any passenger who decides in flight to flout those rules —whatever they are —has no business on a plane.

Airlines currently have wide latitude to bar disruptive passengers from future flights, but they generally have no way to know if a given passenger has already been banned from another airline. Delta Air Lines chief executive Edward H. Bastian is publicly pushing for the logical step of formalizing an industry-wide banning system with federal enforcement. The federal government already enforces a no-fly list for people credibly deemed to pose a threat of terrorism.

One suggestion that may make sense would be to add a category to the existing federal list, looping in people who have been convicted of disruptive behavior on planes. That's a higher standard than individual airlines currently have to follow; they can ban passengers based on their behavior alone, even if they aren't criminally charged. A higher standard for a total federal ban makes sense because an across-the-board prohibition from all airlines is a tougher penalty. But it's one that's justified for those who bring belligerence to the formerly friendly skies.

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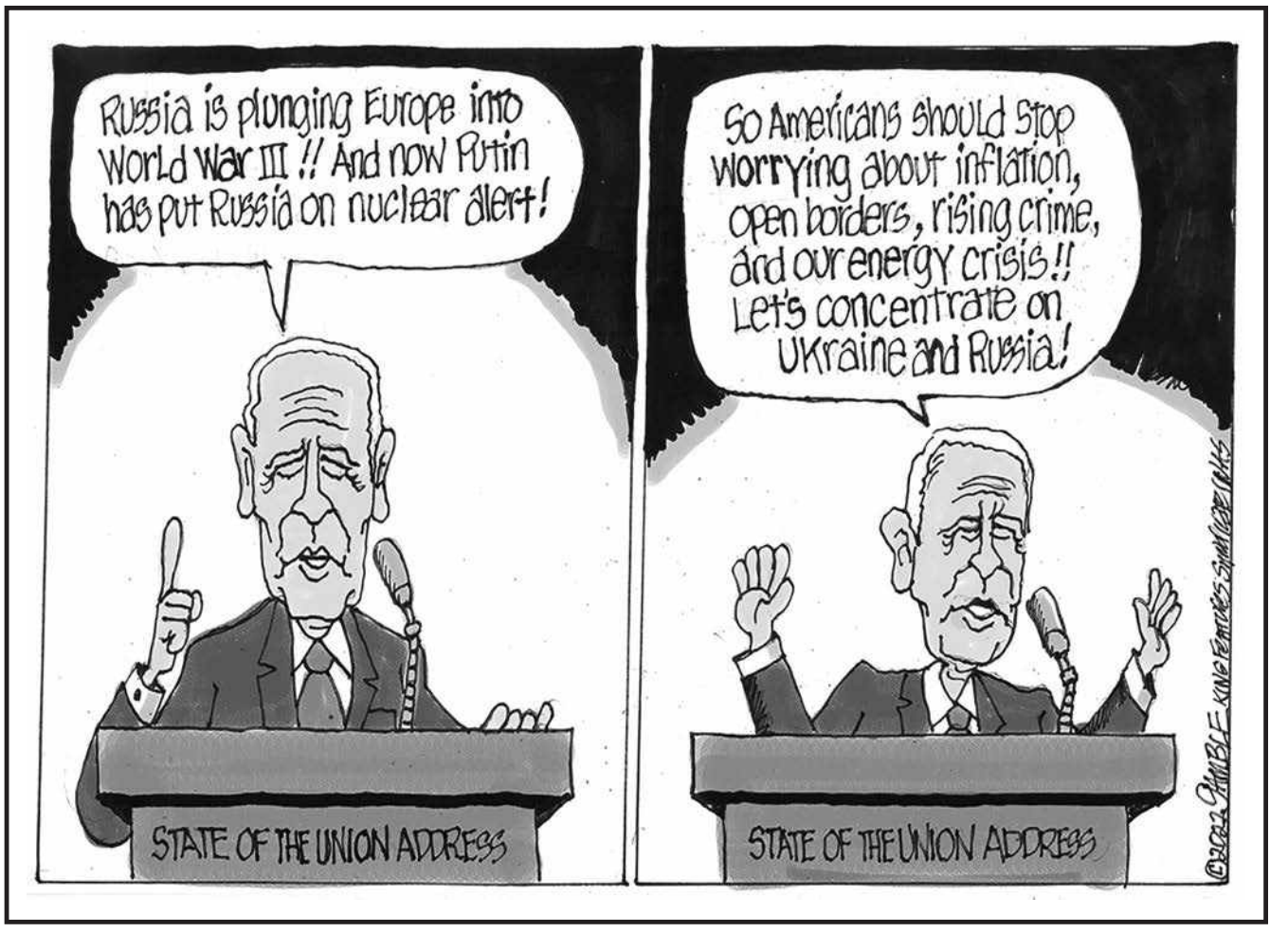

Russia is plunging Europe into World War III !! And now Putin has put Russia on nuclear alert!
STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS
So Americans should stop worrying about inflation, open borders, rising crime, and our energy crisis!! Let's concentrate on Ukraine and Russia!
STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

Ukraine reminds us of what we already knew

By CLIVE CROOK
Bloomberg Opinion

Clive Crook is a Bloomberg Opinion *columnist and member of the editorial board covering economics, finance and politics. A former chief Washington commentator for the* Financial Times*, he has been an editor for the* Economist *and the* Atlantic*.*

Russia's invasion of Ukraine somehow managed to be shocking despite having been predicted, repeatedly, by President Joe Biden and members of his administration. Even the people making the predictions didn't seem to believe them. Now that it's happened and the implications are sinking in, the gap between the reality of the world and America's perception of it looks vast.

It's almost enough to make one wonder if a bitterly divided America has been fighting about the wrong questions.

If the U.S. and its European allies were more confident and concerted, they might have given Russian President Vladimir Putin pause. But the U.S. isn't merely divided; it is distracted. America's cultural civil war has turned attention away from questions—about trade, national security and economic policy—that turn out to matter a lot.

Precisely what Putin hopes to achieve with this war isn't clear. The strength of popular resistance might have taken him by surprise. With luck, his invasion will eventually be judged a colossal mistake. For the moment, though, one thing is plain: His grievance over what the U.S. and the West have done to Russia is a driving force. Chinese President Xi Jinping, on guardedly good terms with Putin of late, also thinks honor is at stake in his dealings with a scheming, self-righteous and historically oppressive West.

Guess what, as Biden might say: Two of the world's great nuclear-armed military powers see Europe and the U.S. not as potential friends or even rivals but as actual or prospective enemies.

As with the invasion of Ukraine, this was something we knew yet chose not to believe. Three decades after the collapse of the Soviet Union and China's embrace of capitalism with totalitarian characteristics, the world is an extremely dangerous place.

The coming weeks and months are likely to make it more so. The West wasn't willing to talk about Ukraine's future as a non-aligned state (a discussion that, to be sure, might have led nowhere). Until a week ago, sovereignty trumped artillery. Now Ukraine's future may be subjugation to Russia, with Russian forces all along NATO's eastern borders while Putin weighs next steps. These developments will be of great interest to Xi, as he judges the new demands on the attention and defense spending of the U.S. and its allies, and muses on the future of Taiwan.

In a world where brute force matters in the affairs of nations, the wise course is to talk softly and carry a big stick. Talk softly, because humiliating heavily armed opponents is apt to make them more dangerous; carry a big stick, because your own ability to meet force with superior force will make them less so. It isn't a huge exaggeration—and it's barely any exaggeration in Europe's case—to say the West's approach to great-power rivalry in the post-Cold War era has been to talk loudly and carry no stick. What's unfolding in Ukraine is the result.

This sudden ability to believe what we know about the world might not last. In due course, we might be astounded by a Chinese attack on Taiwan. (I mean, who could have seen that coming?) But if it does last, it will call for markedly different approaches to international relations. National security will demand a much larger share of attention and resources even in the U.S., which had hoped to economize by pivoting away from commitments in Europe. The challenge for Europe itself is far more daunting: It will need to address such questions for the first time in living memory.

The implications aren't confined to spending more on defense or asking whether NATO is still fit for purpose. The U.S. and its allies will have to think harder about achievable ends (which foreign policy ambitions does talking softly rule out?) and available means (how big a stick is it willing to buy?).

Global economic relations are also involved. Germany and Europe made a grave mistake in coming to depend so heavily on Russian gas. From Putin's point of view, this was no accident. He thought it would blunt the West's response to his ambitions—and so it did, initially at least. The West's dependence on Chinese manufacturing, not just for consumer products but for critical inputs, also fits the pattern. For the West, it's all just business as usual; for Beijing, it builds prosperity but also serves a larger geopolitical purpose.

As a neoliberal of long standing, I choke at the idea of making trade and industrial policy part of a national security strategy. The scope for abuse and incompetence is virtually unlimited. Trump's idiotic tariffs—many of them based on specious national security grounds, applied to friends as well as potential foes—prove the point. Their principal victim was the U.S. itself. Nonetheless, the Ukraine moment of clarity shows how dangerous completely divorcing trade and domestic investment from geopolitics can be.

Is this view a dagger at the heart of globalization? It certainly

See UKRAINE on Next Page

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

'Where is justice, fairness and honor?'

Editor's Note: Rep. Corina Magofña (D-Saipan) delivered the following remarks in the Senate chamber during the public comments section of the session last Monday, Feb. 28, 2022.

Hafa Adai yan tirow. Good afternoon to our honorable senators and the viewing public. My name is Corina Magofña, and I am here to represent the voices of my constituents from Precinct 3. The people of our Commonwealth have the right to have us, the House of Representatives, conduct a fair trial as stated by our honorable Speaker Edmund S. Villagomez.

It is imperative and of utmost importance that we the people remind you, our honorable senators, that you are sitting here today in that very prestigious seat. Why? Because "We The People" elected you, to represent us, us alone, and no one else!

We the people must remind you, our honorable senators, that you took an oath and swore to uphold your fiduciary duties. But most importantly, to do what is right and in the best interest of our people.

Now let me ask you all this: Are the Rules of Impeachment (as it stands today) for the impeached official (Gov. Ralph Torres) for the best interest of our people? I think not! And I can guarantee you that many of your constituents who elected you into office feel the very same way.

So ask yourselves again, Hayi un represe-senta? I taotao-ta pat i gubetnu? I sure hope you know the answer to this question because I know our people are watching and listening to see who your loyalty is to.

Now with regards to the Impeachment Rules, which was adopted last Friday, let's do a quick comparison here between our former governor Benigno R. Fitial and Ralph DLG Torres. Gov. Fitial had 18 pages and 24 Rules, Gov. Torres has 28 pages and 44 Rules. I'll let you marinate on that while I talk about the rules that are just so unbelievably unfair and unconstitutional.

Let us be open and honest that there is no ambiguity to what Rule 9 truly entails: the proverbial "forest and the trees" analogy. For those in attendance who aren't familiar with this phrase, it simply means that we must look beyond mere words to see the hidden message being conveyed. Also known as the author's overall intent."

Here, I noticed an almost comical, if not for the serious matter before us, unreasonable, and unconscionable demands on one of the most important, if not the most important, subject matter herein.

The committee has daring initiative, through purposeful acts of their own, managed to create a rule that solely benefits, favors, comforted and/or cuddle the impeached official, Ralph Torres, with most of favorable terms and conditions to an almost guaranteed success outcome.

Basically, the Senate Impeachment Rules seek to, first, find a way to remove the Impeachment Prosecutor (Rule 9, section (d)). If all House Impeachment Records and Transmittal thereof is successful and removal of said Impeachment Prosecutor failed;

The Second fortification is to have the House Impeachment Record Automatically Stricken and only the impeachment matter (whatever this is) shall proceed to Senate. (Rule 9, section(c)(2)) And to sweeten the pot, an added measure, also prevents the Impeachment Prosecutor from appearing on Senate Hearing and Proceeding.

If all else fails, i.e. the Impeachment Prosecutor made it through, House Impeachment Records is properly certified and Impeachment Prosecutor still given the okay to attend the Senate Hearing and Proceeding.

The Third, and final, last ditch-effort takes the cake and tailored only for countries such as Russia, China and North Korea.

Let the impeached official strike any part or the entire House Impeachment Record or supplement any part or the entire House Impeachment Record as he so chooses. Rule 9(g) in laymen's terms: no prosecutor, no records, and if all else fails, let the accused decide. Where is justice, fairness and honor?"

And just what message is the impeached official sending to his very own staff and agencies, who are under his administration, by even having this rule? That the records they submitted to the JGO committee were unreliable and lacked integrity?

Also, Rule 9 fails to provide what mechanism is to be provided to the House prosecutor to contest the impeached official's request. Nothing! Taya! So I ask again, where is the fairness and respect for our people? Senators, what is your message to our people?

Now let's go back to the comparison between Gov. Fitial vs. Torres: 24 rules for Fitial and 44 rules for Torres. That's a difference of 20 rules. Why is that? Why add 20 additional stringent rules for Ralph Torres? It is very obvious that these rules are lopsided to favor Ralph Torres and not our people!

To the people of the Commonwealth, the Senate has given very stringent, unconscionable terms and conditions that caters to one man and one man alone. A dictatorial-type of acts may possibly be up for debate under these conditions if I do say so myself.

Nevertheless, Ralph Torres is not a man with any significant means of public contribution aside from the federal handouts under the people's name; that may be his true worth.

A true and honorable governor status belongs to one who selflessly contributes to the advancement for his people, and one that does not try to take all the credit for all the good things that happen for his commonwealth.

There is no 'I' in team!

Si yu'us ma'ase and *ghilisow.*

By CORINA MAGOFÑA
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Corina Magofña is a member of the House of Representatives of the 22nd Legislature, representing Precinct 3.

'Make appropriate amendments, produce fair rules'

Editor's Note: Rep. Sheila Babauta (D-Saipan), delivered the following remarks in the Senate chamber during the public comments section of the session last Monday, Feb. 28, 2022.

Hafa adai, tirow, kaselehlie maingko honorable members of the Senate. My name is Sheila Jack Babauta and I'm here to provide public comment on the Senate Impeachment Rules. I am here in my official capacity as a Precinct 4 representative in the 22nd House of Representatives.

It's been 47 days since the governor was impeached in the House and, although I'm grateful that there are finally impeachment rules made public, I want to state for the record that these rules are clearly biased and I'm extremely disappointed in the process in which they were adopted: lacking transparency and sufficient notice.

There are two issues I'd like to highlight, the first being Rule 5, Burden of Proof at Hearing requiring "clear and convincing evidence" as the standard of proof, which is unreasonably high.

This is not a criminal case.

Even the CNMI Supreme Court does "not view the Senate impeachment trial as comparable to a civil or criminal proceeding. It is a uniquely legislative and political function" as stated in the letter signed by Chief Justice Castro and Associate Justices Inos and Manglona on Jan. 28, 2022.

The clear and convincing standard of proof is higher than the standard that would have been used for the Gov. Fitial trial. The "clear and convincing" standard of proof is even higher than the standard used in the Trump impeachment trials.

Why? Why are we setting the standard higher than the one used to impeach the President of the United States? There is no standard listed in our CNMI Constitution, and there is no standard listed in the U.S. Constitution, so the unreasonably high standard of "clear and convincing evidence" is clearly meant to work in favor of the governor.

The second issue I'd like to highlight is the limitation on representation and use of legal counsel, limiting the House prosecutors to only the House speaker or, if he declines, only the chairman of the House Impeachment Committee, or if he declines, only the House member selected by the Senate president. This is simply unfair.

The House, which has the burden to prove, only has one prosecutor. The governor, who has no burden of proof whatsoever, has no limitations on his counsel. The House prosecutor is not an attorney, and even with the assistance of two House counsels, only the House prosecutor can ask questions, raise objections, make motions, and make the opening statement and closing argument. The governor's counsel will be an attorney with training and experience and, again, will have no limitations.

It's clear that the Senate is limiting our ability to present a robust case and conduct a fair trial. This impeachment process will set precedence. Because this is a first in CNMI history, future CNMI legislatures will look to us, the 22nd Legislature, for guidance on the process and rules.

This is not the example we should be modelling. It is problematic and one-sided. It exerts a chilling effect, ultimately discouraging any future House of Representatives who might want to pursue oversight of the executive or judiciary branch, deterring the House from exercising its clear constitutional right to initiate impeachment proceedings.

The emphasis of the impeachment process is on the significant effects of the governor's conduct, undermining the integrity of office, neglect of constitutional duties and oath of office, abrogation of power, and abuse of the governmental process.

I urge this body to make appropriate amendments to produce impeachment rules that are fair to the process and the people.

By SHEILA THERESE J. BABAUTA
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Sheila Babauta is a member of the House of Representatives of the 22nd Legislature, representing Precinct 4.

UKRAINE

From Page 8

calls into question globalization as we've known it. Trade remains, as ever, an engine of economic growth—and, in liberal democracies, a strong economy is a precondition for adequate spending on defense. But strategic calculations will need to play a bigger role, and that does call into question the bedrock principle of non-discrimination in trade.

Depending on potential enemies for essential materials and manufactures is a mistake. The alternative isn't self-sufficiency, even if that were possible, but a more deliberate conception of strategic resilience plus closer economic cooperation with friends and allies.

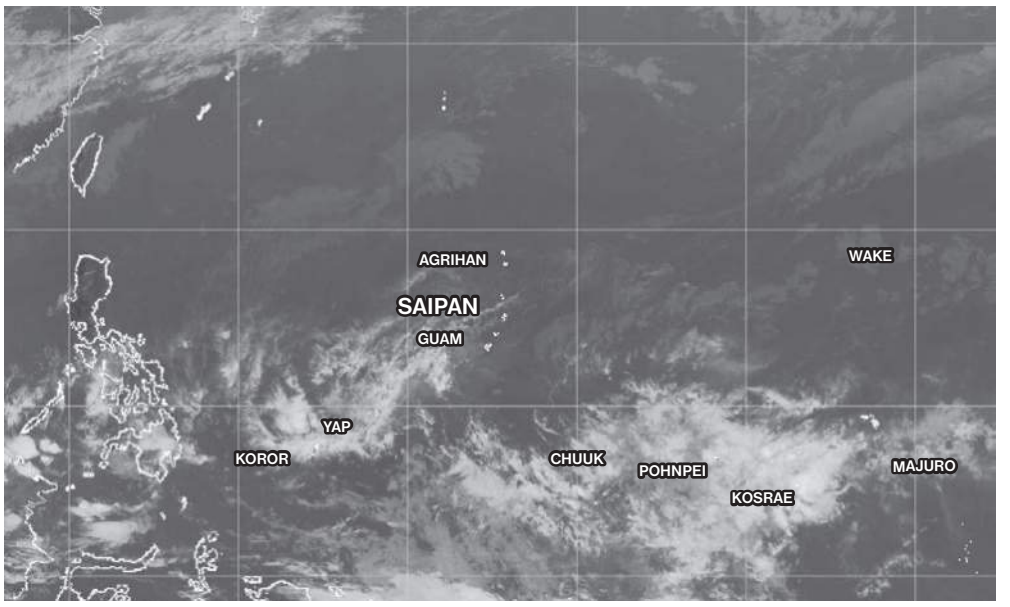
It would be an understatement to call this reassessment demanding. The difficulties are so acute, in fact, that retreating to cognitive dissonance will be the much easier choice. And there's no hope whatever of grappling with these issues effectively, or of telling the world that America has purpose and conviction, unless the country can repair its domestic politics. Ukraine shows that cultural civil war is a luxury the U.S. cannot afford.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Partly cloudy and breezy with isolated showers. Northeast winds 20 to 25 mph.	Mostly cloudy with scattered showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Mostly cloudy with a chance of showers and a slight chance of thunderstorms.	Mostly cloudy with a chance of showers and a slight chance of thunderstorms.	Mostly cloudy. Isolated showers
86º 75º	86º 77	86º 75º	86º 75º	85º 76º

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 6:55 AM, TUESDAY, MARCH 1, 2022

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Guam Doppler weather radar shows scattered showers moving through and south of Guam Waters. The Ipan and Ritidian buoys reveal combined seas of 8 to 10 feet, primarily composed of an east to east-northeast trade-wind swell.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

MICRONESIA	▲ ▼ °F	
Guam and Rota	Scattered Thunderstorms/Wind	29 / 25 °F
Palau	Partly Cloudy	30 / 26 °F
Yap	Isolated Thunderstorms	29 / 25 °F
Chuuk	Thunderstorms	29 / 26 °F
Pohnpei	AM Rain	29 / 26 °F
Kosrae	Cloudy	29 / 26 °F
Majuro	Thunderstorms	29 / 26 °F

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	06:33 AM	18:24 PM
Thursday	06:33 AM	18:25 PM
Friday	06:32 AM	18:25 PM
Saturday	06:31 AM	18:25 PM
Sunday	06:31 AM	18:25 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	06:11	18:01 PM	-
Thursday	06:55	18:57 PM	-
Friday	07:35	19:50 PM	-
Saturday	08:14	20:42 PM	-
Sunday	08:51	21:32 PM	-

AROUND THE GLOBE	▲ ▼ °F	
Auckland	Showers	23 / 15 °F
Beijing	Sunny	16 / -2 °F
Hong Kong	Mostly Sunny	23 / 17 °F
Honolulu	Mostly Sunny	28 / 19 °F
London	Light Rain	9 / 85°F
Los Angeles	Mostly Sunny	28 / 11 °F
Manila	Mostly Sunny	34/ 25 °F
Melbourne	PM Showers	28 / 17 °F
Miami	Partly Cloudy	25 / 21 °F
New York	Mostly Sunny	11 / 5 °F
Osaka	Partly Cloudy	13 / 5 °F
Paris	Cloudy	13 / 7 °F
Busan	Partly Cloudy	12 / 3 °F
Rome	Sunny	13 / 2 °F
Salem	Sunny	24 / 7 °F
San Francisco	Cloudy	14 / 9 °F
Seoul	Sunny	8 / -2 °F
Tokyo	Mostly Cloudy	14 / 97F
Washington, DC	Partly Cloudy	17 / 9 °F

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY	FEET	
01:27 AM	Low Tide	-0.47
08:17 AM	High Tide	1.84
1:58 PM	Low Tide	0.85
7:08 PM	High Tide	1.89

STOP THE SPREAD

The Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. continue to encourage residents within the Marianas to practice social distancing, which means avoiding close contact with people in order to avoid catching the virus yourself and to avoid passing it on to others.

■ Stay home as much as possible. Avoid unnecessary travel or public places.

■ Avoid social gatherings in groups of more than 10.

■ Choose drive-thru, take-out, or delivery options, or outdoor seating, if available, when dining in.

■ Send only one healthy adult from the household run necessary errands, such as getting groceries or picking up medications. Leave children, elderly, and other vulnerable people at home as much as possible. When returning home from an errand, wash your hands before doing anything else.

■ Older adults and people with chronic medical conditions are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness. People at high risk should stay at home as much as possible.

■ Create a household plan of action, https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/checklisthousehold-ready.html

■ Ensure a 30-day supply of all medicines.

Continue good hand hygiene

■ Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, avoid touching your face, cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve.

■ Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not readily available.

Know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and what to do if you become symptomatic

■ Stay home when you are sick and if you recently traveled to a place with COVID-19. Self-quarantine means:

• Choosing a room in your house that can be used to separate sick household members from others.

• Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

• Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

• Limiting visitors

CHCC appreciates the patience and understanding of the community at this time. To obtain general information about the CNMI COVID-19 response, contact the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force Hotline at 287-0046, 287-0489, 287-1089. These numbers are available Monday to Sunday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For medical information about COVID-19, reach out to the COVID-19 Infoline at the following numbers: 285-1672/1352. These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For mental health support and helpful tips during a crisis, call the Mental Health Support Line at 285-1856, 323-6560, 323-6561 These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30 pm. For the 24/7 Disaster Distress Helpline, call SAMSHA at 1-800-985-5990.

For more information about DIY face coverings, visit https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html

For more information about CHCC programs, follow CHCC on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter at @cnmichcc, check out our website at www.chcc.gov.mp or call us at (670) 234-8950.

For more information on the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force, visit www.governor.gov.mpand, follow @GovernorCNMI on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

This health advisory may be found online at http://www.chcc.gov.mp/pressrelease.html and at www.governor.gov.mp/covid-19.

Rumor control

During crises like this, oftentimes the spread of misinformation is just as dangerous as the virus itself. The CNMI is reminded to only share official and verified notices, press releases, and advisories from the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and CHCC.

Source: Office of the Governor

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF FEBRUARY 14, 2022

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA117	7:20am	8:05am	2, 4, 6
UA117	9:50am	10:35am	1, 3, 5, 7

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

PR 111	6:30am	8:20am	1, 3, 5
UA183	8:00pm	9:50pm	Daily

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

UA117/183	7:20am	9:50pm	2, 4, 6 via Guam
UA117/183	9:50am	9:50pm	1, 3, 5, 7 via Guam

SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)

7C3406	3:10PM	6:55PM	Every 4 days (Jan 29-Mar 30)
TW9308	3:30PM	7:20PM	4, 7
OZ6243	4:00PM	7:40PM	3, 6

SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)

BX621	3:10PM	6:30PM	7

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA116	5:30am	6:16am	2, 4, 6
UA116	8:00am	8:46am	7
UA174	8:00am	8:46am	1, 3, 5

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

PR110	10:15pm	4:00am+1	2, 4, 7
UA184	10:40pm	4:30am+1	2, 5
UA184	10:55pm	4:45am+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA184/116	10:40pm	6:16am+1	5 via Guam
UA184/174	10:40pm	8:46am+1	2 via Guam
UA184/116	10:55pm	6:16am+1	1, 3 via Guam
UA184/174	10:55pm	8:46am+1	4, 7 via Guam
UA184/116	10:55pm	8:46am+1	6 via Guam

INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN

7C3405	8:30AM	2:10PM	Every 4 days (Jan 29-Mar 30)
TW9307	9:00AM	Q2:30PM	4, 7
OZ6233	9:00AM	2:30PM	3, 6

BUSAN (PUS)-SAIPAN

BX622	8:00AM	1:10PM	7

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF MAY 18, 2021

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1301	8:30AM	9:00AM	Daily
1302	11:00AM	11:30AM	Daily
1303	1:30PM	2:00PM	Tues/Wed/ Thurs/Fri
1304	3:30PM	4:00PM	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3101	9:30AM	10:00AM	Daily
3102	12:00AM	12:30AM	Daily
3103	1:30PM	3:00PM	Tues/Wed/ Thurs/Fri
3104	4:30PM	5:00PM	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3401	12:15	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
4301	13:00	13:30	Temporarily Unavailable

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

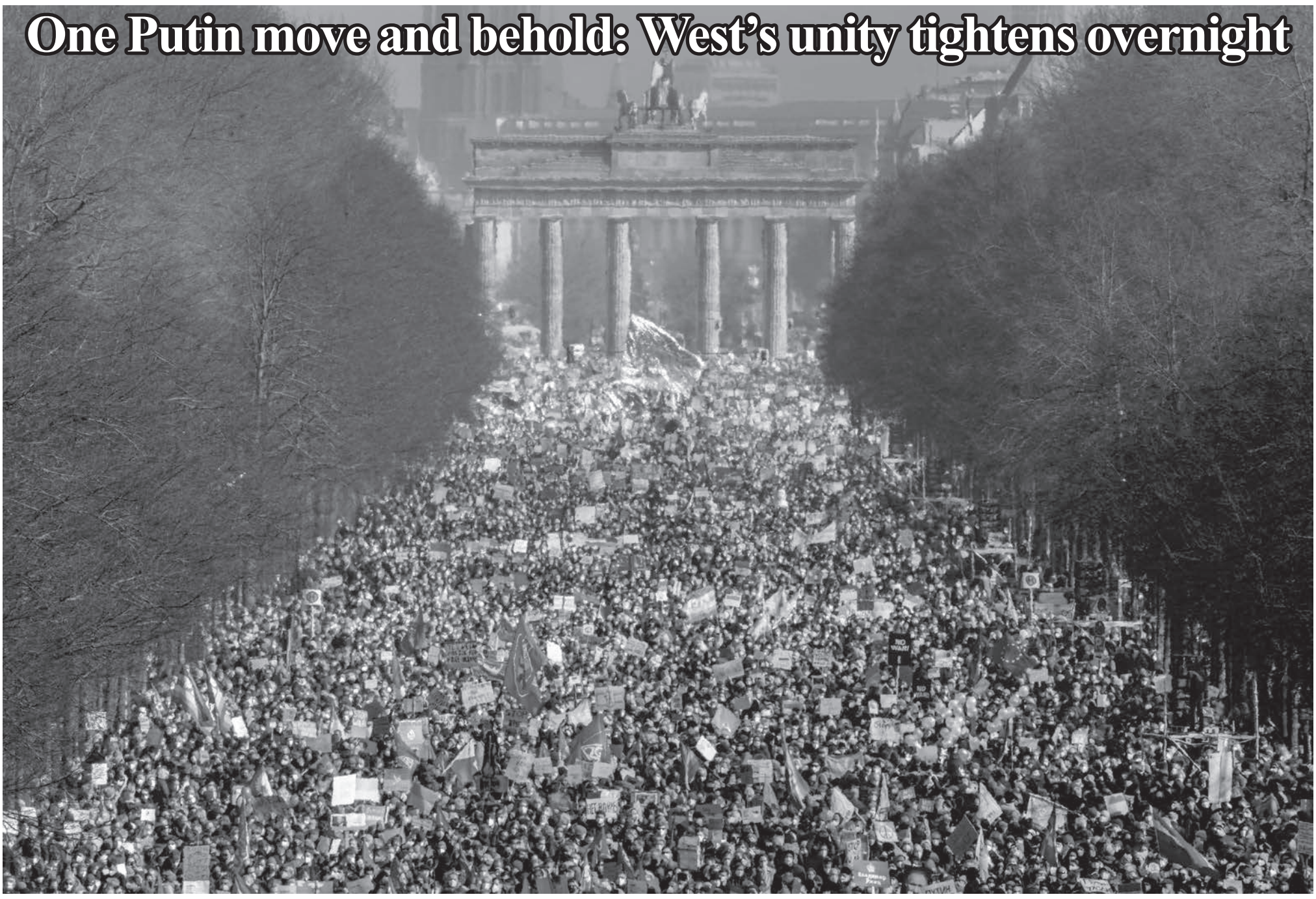
FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1201	7:00	7:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1202	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	10:00	10:15	Daily
1205	11:00	11:15	Daily
1206	12:00	12:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1207	13:00	13:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1208	14:00	14:15	Daily
1209	15:00	15:15	Daily
1210	16:00	16:15	Daily
1211	17:00	17:15	Daily
1212	17:00	17:15	Temporarily Unavailable

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
2101	7:30	7:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2102	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	10:30	10:45	Daily
2105	11:30	11:45	Daily
2106	12:30	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2107	13:30	13:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2108	14:30	14:45	Daily
2109	15:30	15:45	Daily
2110	16:30	16:45	Daily
2111	17:30	17:45	Daily
2112	18:30	18:45	Temporarily Unavailable

Business

One Putin move and behold: West's unity tightens overnight



People walk down the boulevard 'Strasse des 17. Juni' ahead of a rally against Russia's invasion of Ukraine in Berlin, Germany, Feb. 27, 2022. AP

BRUSSELS (AP)—Within days, Russian President Vladimir Putin has achieved what remained out of the grasp of the European Union for many decades—to jointly buy and send weapons to a war zone—and restored something that was broken for years—trans-Atlantic unity.

For years, Putin could sit back and relish in unseemly scenes of Western disunity—ranging from the Britain's Brexit move out of the EU in 2016, Hungary's long-standing antipathy towards its EU headquarters and, equally, the rift created by former President Donald Trump that has far from fully healed under Joe Biden.

For Putin, the timing seemed perfect for his invasion of Ukraine since it had the potential of opening the cracks of division even further, with a war on the continent forcing everyone far outside their diplomatic comfort zone.

"And just as Vladimir Putin thought that he would destroy European unity, exactly the opposite thing has happened," European Council President Charles Michel said in an interview with a small group of reporters on Monday.

"Cooperation is solid as a rock," he said. "This is demanded by the circumstances of history. Demanded by circumstances that none of us could have imagined," Michel added.

Washington could not agree more. "President Putin has been one of the greatest unifiers of NATO in modern history, so I guess that is one thing we can thank him for," said White House press secretary Jen Psaki.

Richard Haass, president of the New York-based think tank Council on Foreign Relations, said it was "stunning" how European politics have been transformed in recent days.

"Putin has done what no one in the West could do, which is revive the concept of the West," Haass said.

On Monday, Biden was leading another videoconference with EU, Britain and other Western leaders to solidify a common package of sanctions that are unprecedented in scope and unity. Over the weekend, Brussels and Washington announced financial sanctions within minutes of each other, all targeting the central bank and cutting Russia out of much of the SWIFT international financial transaction system.

A free-for-all but no crippling cyberattacks in Ukraine war

RICHMOND, Va. (AP)—Russia has some of the best hackers in the world, but in the early days of the war in Ukraine, its ability to create mayhem through malware hasn't had much of a noticeable impact.

Instead, it's Ukraine that's marshalled sympathetic volunteer hackers in an unprecedented collective global effort to make the Kremlin pay for making war on its neighbor. It's a kind of cyber free-for-all that experts say risks escalating a moment already fraught with extraordinary danger after Russian President Vladimir Putin put his nuclear forces on alert.

So far, Ukraine's internet mostly works, its president still able to rally global support via a smartphone, and its power plants and other critical infrastructure still able to function. The kind of devastating cyberattacks thought likely to accompany a large-scale Russian military invasion haven't happened.

"It has not played as large a component as some people thought it might and it definitely has not been seen outside of Ukraine to the extent that people feared," said Michael Daniel, a former White House cybersecurity coordinator. "Of course, that could still change."

It's not clear why Russia hasn't landed a more powerful cyber punch. Russia might have determined that the impact wouldn't be serious enough—Ukraine's industrial base is far less digitized than in Western nations, for one. Or Russia might have determined that it couldn't do serious harm to Ukraine without risking collateral impact outside its borders.

Many cybersecurity experts believe the Kremlin, at least for now, prefers to keep Ukraine's communications open for the intelligence value.

Whatever the reasons, the conflict's early days have been marked by lower-level cyberattacks that appear to be done both by freelancers and state actors.

Prior to the invasion, hackers knocked offline or defaced Ukrainian government websites and wiped some servers with destructive malware. Now, an ad hoc army of hackers—some marshaled online by Ukraine's SBU security service—are claiming credit for takedowns and defacements of Russian government and media sites.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Chris Licht appointed as new CNN chief to replace Zucker

NEW YORK (AP)—CNN's future leader, Chris Licht, told network employees on Monday that he plans to "double-down on what's working well and quickly eliminate what's not." Discovery CEO David Zaslav announced that Licht, currently Stephen Colbert's top producer at CBS, will replace Jeff Zucker as head of CNN, likely in May. That's when Discovery's corporate takeover of Warner Media, CNN's parent company, is expected to be complete. Prior to guiding Colbert's "Late Show" to the top of the late-night ratings, Licht ran "CBS This Morning" and helped develop "Morning Joe" on MSNBC with host Joe Scarborough. "I am a journalist at heart," Licht wrote in a memo to CNN employees on Monday. "While I have enjoyed every minute at the 'Late Show,' I am joining CNN because I feel a genuine pull to return to news at such a critical moment in history."

GM says Cruise robo-car unit will be helmed by founder Vogt

DETROIT (AP)—General Motors said Monday that Kyle Vogt will take over as CEO of its Cruise autonomous vehicle subsidiary, a company he helped found in 2013. A GM representative confirmed what Vogt posted on Twitter, that he had "once again" accepted the job as CEO of Cruise. He replaces Dan Ammann. The Detroit automaker announced in December that Ammann was leaving the company to be replaced by Vogt as interim CEO at Cruise. Cruise is operating a small fleet of autonomous-vehicle in San Francisco that it opened to the general public at the beginning of February. GM expects to get a permit to charge passengers for autonomous rides this year. "Based on feedback from early users of our robo-taxi service, we've made something really special," Vogt tweeted Monday. "I try to stay clear of too much hype and unrealistic expectations, but this just feels absurdly better than the status quo. We've needed this for a long time."

Nation

California, Oregon, Washington to drop school mask mandates

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP)—Schoolchildren in California, Oregon and Washington will no longer be required to wear masks as part of new indoor mask policies the Democratic governors of all three states announced jointly on Monday.

"With declining case rates and hospitalizations across the West, California, Oregon and Washington are moving together to update their masking guidance," the governors said in a statement. There are more than 7.5 million school-age children across the three states, which have had some of the strictest coronavirus safety measures during the pandemic.

The new guidance will make face coverings strongly recommended rather than a requirement at most indoor places in California starting Tuesday and at schools on March 12, regardless of vaccination status. In Washington and Oregon, all the requirements will lift on March 12. In all three states, the decision of whether to follow the state guidance will now rest with school districts.

The milestone, two years in the making, comes as much of the country relaxes public health orders, including school mask mandates, in an effort to restore normalcy and boost economic recovery.

AP

Kindergarteners wear masks while listening to their teacher amid the COVID-19 pandemic at Washington Elementary School on Jan. 12, 2022, in Lynwood, Calif.

The changes reflect a growing sense that the virus is not going away and Americans need to learn to live with it. New York Gov. Kathy Hochul, a Democrat, announced Sunday that the state's masking requirements in schools would be lifted by March 2. New Jersey, Delaware, Massachusetts and others recently made similar adjustments to ease restrictions for schools.

The announcements signal a turning point that is poignant in its timing, coming almost exactly two years after American cities began shutting down to prevent COVID-19's spread. California was the first state to announce a shutdown with stay-at-home orders in March 2020, followed soon after by other states.

"Two years ago today, we identified Oregon's first case of COVID-19," Oregon Gov. Kate Brown said in the statement. "On the West Coast our communities and economies are linked. Together, as we continue to recover from the Omicron surge, we will build resiliency and prepare for the next variant and the next pandemic."

Earlier this month, California became the first state to formally shift to an endemic approach to the coronavirus with Gov. Gavin Newsom's announcement of a plan that emphasizes prevention and quick reaction to outbreaks over mandated masking and business shutdowns.

Newsom has come under growing pressure from Republicans and other critics to ease the school mandate, which has increasingly become a polarizing issue among parents, with some questioning why it's still necessary when masks are no longer required in other public places.

The powerful California Teachers Association said it expected a mixed reaction to the announcement.

"While some students are ready to immediately remove their masks, others remain very afraid," CTA President E. Toby Boyd said in a statement. The union has more than 300,000 members. "Change is never easy, and today's announcement is bound to disrupt and destabilize school communities."

A handful of California school districts have already dropped mask mandates for students in recent weeks in open defiance of the state mandate. Meanwhile, a survey published last week by the UC Berkeley's Institute of Governmental Studies found that more than 60% of California parents still support wearing masks in schools.

Man kills 3 children, 1 other, himself at California church

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP)—A man shot and killed his three children, one other person and himself at a church in Sacramento, California, on Monday, authorities said.

Deputies responding to reports of gunfire around 5 p.m. found five people dead, including the shooter, at the church in the Arden-Arcade neighborhood, said Sgt. Rod Grassmann with the Sacramento County Sheriff's Office.

The victims included three juveniles under 15 years of age, Grassman said. He didn't know their genders.

The identity of the other victim wasn't immediately known.

A church employee heard the gunshots and called 911, Grassman said. The shooting occurred in the main sanctuary area, he said.

Sheriff's officials are investigating it as a domestic violence incident, Grassman said.

Officials didn't know if the family members belonged to the church, which sits on a mostly residential block near a commercial area east of downtown Sacramento.

It wasn't immediately known how many people were at the church or if there were any services or activities at the time of the shooting.

State of the Union: Amid disputes, common cause for Ukraine

WASHINGTON (AP)—They have argued viciously in Congress over just about everything: Whether the Capitol insurrection should be investigated or brushed aside. If the president's choice for the Supreme Court should be the first Black woman. Even over whether or not to wear masks under the dome.

But as lawmakers gather for President Joe Biden's first State of the Union address amid the gravity of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, they have mustered a rare and remarkable bipartisan resolve, determined to hold the U.S. and its allies together in the defense of a Western-oriented democracy.

When Biden stands in the House chamber Tuesday evening, trying to make good on what until now has been a faltering attempt to resolve the nation's bitter divisions, he may find that the threat from Russian President Vladimir Putin abroad has become the unexpected force pulling the U.S. political parties toward common purpose.

"I think you will see in the State of the Union, a strong bipartisan support for our president," predicts Sen. Chris Coons, D-Del., a Biden ally.

The turn of events is both stunning and fragile. Foreign policy has not been the kind of bipartisan draw it was during the past century, when Congress and the White House worked together as the U.S. dominated the global stage. Factions on the right and left have broken off, most definitively over the long wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, creating oddball political alliances in the U.S. and chiseling away at a shared mission.

The revival of a robust majority that's largely supportive of Biden's strategy toward Russia is even more striking because it is shaping up as one of the most significant rejections of Donald Trump's embrace of Putin and the former president's praise of Putin's tactics as Russia invaded Ukraine.

"We're all together at this point and we need to be together about what should be done," said Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky.

Still, the State of the Union address may not be free of partisan antics, unfolding against the backdrop of a Congress deeply divided over many issues: a prime-time address to the nation, too tempting for lawmakers looking for attention.

This year is particularly fraught amid ongoing COVID restrictions and a Capitol still largely shuttered to the public in part because of the security concerns in the aftermath of the deadly Jan. 6, 2021, assault by Trump supporters trying to stop Congress from certifying Biden's election.

ACROSS THE NATION

Man saved after clinging to ice chunk in Alaska's Cook Inlet

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP)—An Alaska man walking on a shoreline wound up clinging to a chunk of ice for more than 30 minutes in frigid water when the shoreline ice broke loose and carried him out into Cook Inlet. Jaime Snedden, 45, of Homer, was rescued Saturday near the community of Anchor Point on the Kenai Peninsula. He was taken to a hospital, where he was treated for hypothermia. He was expected to fully recover, Alaska Wildlife Troopers said. Snedden "was reported to have been walking along the shoreline on the ice when it broke free and drifted into Cook Inlet with the outgoing current," Troopers spokesman Tim DeSpain said in an email to The Associated Press on Monday. Snedden was swept about 300 yards (274 meters) out into the inlet, near the mouth of the Anchor River.

US says it is expelling 12 Russian diplomats for espionage

UNITED NATIONS (AP)—The United States announced Monday it is expelling 12 members of the Russian Mission at the United Nations, accusing them of being "intelligence operatives" engaged in espionage. The Biden administration's action came on the fifth day of Russia's invasion of neighboring Ukraine, which has sparked condemnation from the United States and dozens of other countries. The U.S. Mission to the United Nations said in a statement that the Russian diplomats "have abused their privileges of residency in the United States by engaging in espionage activities that are adverse to our national security." The mission said the expulsions have been "in development for several months" and are in accordance with the United States' agreement with the United Nations as host of the 193-member world body. Russian Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia told The Associated Press, when asked his reaction to the U.S. saying the Russians were engaged in espionage: "They always do. That's the pretext all the time when they announce somebody persona non grata. That is the only explanation they give."

Asia

HK considers lockdown as daily infections exceed 34K

AP

Patients in hospital beds wait at temporary holding area outside Caritas Medical Centre in Hong Kong, Monday, Feb. 28, 2022.

HONG KONG (AP)—Hong Kong reported a record 34,466 new coronavirus infections Monday as deaths continued to climb, as authorities assess the possibilities of locking down the city.

Hong Kong is grappling with a coronavirus surge driven primarily by the omicron variant. Daily cases have more than quadrupled from a week ago, when the city reported over 7,500 infections.

"Once every three days the case number will double," said Albert Au, principal medical and health officer of the city's Centre for Health Protection during a daily virus briefing. "We think that the number will continue to climb."

The city also reported 87 deaths Monday, including 67 people who were unvaccinated.

Health authorities said the government could implement measures that may involve "asking people to stay at home," and that it remains to be seen whether it would be done via legislation or other means.

Hong Kong health minister Sophia Chan said during a radio program Monday that the government is "still discussing" the matter of a lockdown to reduce the flow of people and maximize the effectiveness of mass testing.

Hong Kong officials last week announced citywide universal testing slated for March, with more than 7 million of the city's residents required to undergo testing three times.

Some supermarkets had their shelves wiped bare as residents stockpiled daily necessities after rumors circulated on social media that there was a vote in the legislature to lock down the city for a week.

The legislature denied that such a matter was being discussed.

"The Legislative Council (LegCo) Secretariat is aware of various recorded voice and text messages being widely spread in the society, claiming that LegCo is undergoing legislative work and counting votes for imposing lockdown which prohibits members of the public from leaving home for seven days," it said in a statement Monday.

"The Secretariat clarified today (February 28) that LegCo and its committees have not conducted any discussion on the matter, and reiterated that all meetings of LegCo are open, transparent and broadcast live."

Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam, who visited the Shenzhen Bay Port on Monday night to welcome a group of mainland experts into the city, said to reporters that the government was still assessing whether a lockdown will be implemented to prevent residents from leaving their homes during the upcoming mass-testing exercise.

ASIAN BRIEFS

Myanmar's Suu Kyi pleads not guilty as graft trial continues

BANGKOK (AP) — Ousted Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi pleaded not guilty Monday to a corruption charge that alleged she had accepted $600,000 and seven gold bars from a former political ally, a legal official said. The case is one of 10 in which she is being prosecuted under the anti-corruption law. She is accused of receiving the money and gold bars in 2017-18 from Phyo Min Thein, the former chief minister of Yangon, the country's biggest city. He was also a senior member of her National League for Democracy party. Suu Kyi has been detained since the army toppled her elected government in February last year, and has not been seen or allowed to speak in public since then. All of her court hearings have been closed to the media and public. Her lawyers, before they were served with gag orders late last year, said she rejected all the corruption allegations against her as "absurd."

Thousands evacuate worst Australian floods in decades

CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — Tens of thousands of people had been ordered to evacuate their homes by Tuesday and many more had been told to prepare to flee as parts of Australia's southeast coast are inundated by the worst flooding in decades. Scores of residents, some with with pets, spent hours trapped on their roofs in recent days by a fast-rising river in the town of Lismore in northern New South Wales state, and dozens of cars were trapped on a bridge in the nearby town of Woodburn over Monday night with both the bridge's approaches submerged. Up to 50 people were rescued from the bridge early Tuesday, officials said. "We had no capabilities to get them off in the dark so we just had to make sure that they bunkered down and we went in this morning and got them all out," Woodburn State Emergency Services Commander Ashley Slapp told Australian Broadcasting Corp.

World

Russian forces shell Ukraine's No. 2 city, as they menace Kyiv

KYIV, Ukraine (AP)—Russian forces shelled Ukraine's second-largest city on Monday, rocking a residential neighborhood, and closed in on the capital, Kyiv, in a 40-mile convoy of hundreds of tanks and other vehicles, as talks aimed at stopping the fighting yielded only an agreement to keep talking.

The country's embattled president said the stepped-up shelling was aimed at forcing him into concessions.

"I believe Russia is trying to put pressure (on Ukraine) with this simple method," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said late Monday in a video address. He did not offer details of the hourslong talks that took place earlier, but said that Kyiv was not prepared to make concessions "when one side is hitting each other with rocket artillery."

Amid ever-growing international condemnation, Russia found itself increasingly isolated five days into its invasion, while also facing unexpectedly fierce resistance on the ground in Ukraine and economic havoc at home.

For the second day in a row, the Kremlin raised the specter of nuclear war, announcing that its nuclear-capable intercontinental ballistic missiles, submarines and long-range bombers had all been put on high alert, following President Vladimir Putin's orders over the weekend.

Stepping up his rhetoric, Putin denounced the U.S. and its allies as an "empire of lies."

Meanwhile, an embattled Ukraine moved to solidify its ties to the West by applying to join the European Union—a largely symbolic move for now, but one that is unlikely to sit well with Putin, who has long accused the U.S. of trying to pull Ukraine out of Moscow's orbit.

A top Putin aide and head of the Russian delegation, Vladimir Medinsky, said that the first talks held between the two sides since the invasion lasted nearly five hours and that the envoys "found certain points on which common positions could be foreseen." He said they agreed to continue the discussions in the coming days.

As the talks along the Belarusian border wrapped up, several blasts could be heard in Kyiv, and Russian troops advanced on the city of nearly 3 million. The vast convoy of armored vehicles, tanks, artillery and support vehicles was 17 miles (25 kilometers) from the center of the city and stretched for about 40 miles, according to satellite imagery from Maxar Technologies.

The Maxar photos also showed deployments of ground forces and ground attack helicopter units in southern Belarus.

People in Kyiv lined up for groceries after the end of a weekend curfew, standing beneath a building with a gaping hole blown in its side. Kyiv remained "a key goal" for the Russians, Zelenskyy said, noting that it was hit by three missile strikes on Monday and that hundreds of saboteurs were roaming the city.

520,000-plus refugees have fled Ukraine so far

BEREGSURANY, Hungary (AP)—The mass exodus of refugees from Ukraine to the eastern edge of the European Union showed no signs of stopping Monday, with the U.N. estimating more than 520,000 people have already escaped Russia's burgeoning war against Ukraine.

Long lines of cars and buses were backed up at checkpoints at the borders of Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania and non-EU member Moldova. Others crossed the borders on foot, dragging their possessions behind them.

Several hundred refugees were gathered at a temporary reception center in the Hungarian border village of Beregsurany awaiting transport to transit hubs, where they would be taken further into Hungary and beyond.

Maria Pavlushko, 24, an information technology project manager from Zhytomyr, 100 kilometers (60 miles) west of the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, said she was on a skiing holiday in the Carpathian mountains when she got word from home that Russia's invasion had begun.

"My granny called me saying there is war in the city," she said.

Pavlushko plans to travel from Hungary to Poland, where her mother lives. But her grandmother is still in Zhytomyr, she said, and her father stayed behind to join the fight against the invading Russian forces sent in by Vladimir Putin.

"I am proud about him," she said. "A lot of my friends, a lot of young boys are going ... to kill (the Russian soldiers)."

Many of the refugees in Beregsurany, as in other border areas in Eastern Europe, are from India, Nigeria and other African countries, and were working or studying in Ukraine when the war broke out.

Masroor Ahmed, a 22-year-old Indian medical student studying in Ternopil in western Ukraine, came with 18 other Indian students to the Hungarian border. He said they hoped to reach the capital of Budapest, where India's government has organized an evacuation flight for its citizens.

Questions remain about Mexico 'massacre'

SAN JOSE DE GRACIA, Mexico (AP)—Mexicans were left wondering Monday what happened to about a dozen men who were seen lined up against a wall by drug cartel gunmen toting assault rifles.

In a video apparently shot by a resident of the town San Jose de Gracia in the western state of Michoacan and posted on social media, bursts of gunfire broke out and smoke covered the scene.

The camera cuts away, but some assumed all the men—perhaps as many as 17—died.

But prosecutors said Monday that they cannot say how many died, because the attackers cleaned up the scene, washed the sidewalk and carted away any bodies. Investigators found only a bag full of brains and shell casings at the scene.

The attack Sunday occurred outside a funeral service for the mother of an alleged hitman who had worked for the Jalisco cartel. Jalisco has been fighting long-running, bloody turf battles in Michoacan against rival gangs.

The chief prosecutor of Michoacan state said members of a gang went to the funeral looking for the hitman, who authorities identified only by his first name, Alejandro.

State Prosecutor Adrián López Solís said that the hitman apparently died at the scene and that any other bodies were piled into pickup trucks and carted off by the attackers. Other videos posted on social media showed two or three bodies tossed into a pickup truck.

López Solís said the attack occurred only a few blocks from the town hall, where three local police officers were on duty. He said the police neither went to the scene nor sounded an alarm, contending that "they didn't have sufficient force" to intervene.

Good Housekeeping

WINTER WHITES

By CATHY HOBBS
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

It is often a rule in fashion that the color white should not worn beyond a certain month. But what about home decor? For those seeking a neutral foundation or love the look and feel of white, winter white may offer the best of both worlds.

Why white?

White is often overlooked as a "color." But in home decor, it is one of the most versatile and popular upholstery choices next to gray. For those looking to be able to have versatility and a foundation for which to create a color story, white and especially winter white is a popular choice.

Durability versus aesthetics

Gone are the days where the white living room is seen but not used. Today there are a myriad of fabric choices that will allow for winter white and white upholstery choices to be more forgiving. A long-kept designer secret is the use of commercial- or hospitality-grade fabrics in residential homes. These fabrics aren't only meant to withstand heavy usage, they also repel liquids and in many cases are just as soft and luxurious as residential fabrics.

Where to place white?

Winter white and white selections can be placed in any room where you desire a crisp, lighter look and a neutral foundation.

How to create a color schemes

White can be dressed up or down and paired with either other neutral colors such as black, gray or brown. It can also be used as the perfect foundation for "pops" of bright colors and even pastels. Love the look of tone on tone? Don't be afraid to pair winter white with pure white to create a luxurious monochromatic look and feel.

SCOTT GABRIEL MORRIS/TNS
A winter white sectional sofa is offset by toss pillows that add pops of color.

10 tips to extend the life of home appliances

By MICHAEL SCHROEDER
ANGIE'S LIST

Show your workhorse appliances a little TLC, and they may stick around a bit longer.

Replacing a refrigerator or oven range can take a bite out of your budget, as can buying a new washer or dryer. To make sure your appliances stand the test of time and continue to perform, follow these pointers:

Keep your fridge and freezer clean

In general, appliances operate best when spick-and-span. Besides regularly cleaning up leftovers in the fridge, keep condenser coils clean, says Bud Eader, manager at Bettar Appliance in Kensington, Md. Do so by using a condenser coil brush.

To clean the freezer, unplug it, remove all food, wipe it down with a baking-soda solution, use water to rinse it, and then dry the freezer with a towel before plugging it back in.

Defrost your freezer

Many freezers today are frost-free. However, if you have a manual defrost freezer, plan to defrost it at least once every year, before frost gets to about a half-inch thick. Use a plastic or wooden scrape—no knives or other sharp instruments—to remove the frost layer.

Scrub your oven and range, too

Clean inside your oven often and never let food debris stick around on burners, even if it requires a bit of elbow grease to remove.

Don't spray cleaning fluid directly on control panels though, which could cause them to short circuit. Instead, apply a little onto a rag to clean that surface.

Don't foil your oven

Experts debate whether you should use the self-cleaning feature if your oven comes with one, but they agree you shouldn't use aluminum foil under the baking element.

Replace filters

Whether it's a charcoal filter in an oven, a filter in some dishwashers or refrigerators or the one in your furnace, follow manufacturer guidelines to clean and/or replace them as directed.

Don't use dish soap in the dishwasher

This can hamper the machine's performance by creating gunky buildup. Use only dish detergent.

Scrape off plates

Food debris can clog dishwasher pumps. "It's going to stop up the spray arms and, in the case of emptying the water out, it's possibly going to make the pump ... fail prematurely," Eader says.

Don't overload your clothes washing machine

Doing so adds strain on the motor, tub bearings and other parts, besides not getting your clothes clean if water and detergent can't swish between them. "You shorten the life of the machine," Eader says.

Instead, follow the owner manual instructions on how much to load. Hint: If your machine is banging around under the weight of all of your laundry, you've gone overboard.

Improve your dryer's circulation

Often forgotten, the lint screen needs to be cleaned regularly. Failing to do or allowing your dryer vent to become clogged will force your dryer to work overtime (read: retire sooner) and can present a serious fire hazard. Plan to have your dryer's exhaust system cleaned annually.

Watch where you apply stain removers

Spraying it on top of washers or dryers can corrode painted or plastic parts.

NOW HERE'S A TIP

By JOANN DERSON
(C) 2022 KING FEATURES SYND., INC.

■ "Snow will better slide off a shovel that has been sprayed with furniture polish." -- T.L. in Minnesota

■ Here's an old tip, but a good one: Before going away on vacation, put a couple of ice cubes in a plastic baggie, and set it at the front of the freezer. When you return, if there is any evidence of melting, you will know you lost power while you were gone. If the bag is one big, flat cube, you lost power long enough to suspect all your refrigerator items of being spoiled.

■ To temporarily get a winter frost effect on a window, use this fun recipe: Dissolve 4 to 6 tablespoons of Epsom salts in a beer. When the salt is dissolved, dip a clean rag in the mixture and wipe it on your windowpane. As it dries, crystals will form, creating a frost effect. This is a great solution for a window you don't want to be clear but also don't want to permanently alter. The effect washes off with soap and water.

■ "If you get a residue inside your coffee cups when they go through the dishwasher, it might be time to give your machine a once-over. In the meantime, spray the insides of the coffee cups with a bleach-based cleaner like 409 just before your turn it on. That should help." -- E.T. in Michigan

■ Cut your kitchen sponge in half, or even thirds. You can clean just as well with a smaller sponge, and you will extend its life, saving you money. A smaller sponge dries out more quickly, too.

Send your tips to Now Here's a Tip, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803.

Life & Style

Hollywood halts releases in Russia, including 'The Batman'

NEW YORK (AP)—Warner Bros. is halting the release of "The Batman" in Russia, just days before it was to open in theaters there, as Hollywood moved to cease distribution plans in the country following Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine.

Warner Bros., the Walt Disney Co. and Sony Pictures said Monday that they would "pause" the release of their films in Russia. Each studio has significant upcoming releases that had been set to debut internationally in the coming weeks. "The Batman," one of the year's more anticipated films, launches Friday in North America and many overseas territories, including Russia.

"In light of the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, WarnerMedia is pausing the release of its feature film 'The Batman' in Russia," a spokesperson for the studio said in a statement. "We will continue to monitor the situation as it evolves. We hope for a swift and peaceful resolution to this tragedy."

JONATHAN OLLEY/WARNER BROS. PICTURES VIA AP

This image released by Warner Bros. Pictures shows Zoe Kravitz, left, and Robert Pattinson in a scene from "The Batman."

Warner Bros.' move closely followed a similar decision Monday by the Walt Disney Co. The studio had planned to open the Pixar film "Turning Red" in Russia on March 10. That film is going straight to Disney+ in the U.S. Before Disney's announcement, Warner Bros. had been expected to proceed with the Russian release of "The Batman."

"Given the unprovoked invasion of Ukraine and the tragic humanitarian crisis, we are pausing the release of theatrical films in Russia, including the upcoming 'Turning Red' from Pixar," a Disney spokesperson said in a statement. "We will make future business decisions based on the evolving situation. In the meantime, given the scale of the emerging refugee crisis, we are working with our NGO partners to provide urgent aid and other humanitarian assistance to refugees."

Hollywood scramble plans in Russia late Monday, as global pressure mounted to sever business ties with the country over the war in Ukraine. Western economic sanctions sent Russia's ruble plummeting Monday as numerous nations sought to block Russian banks. On Saturday, the Ukrainian Film Academy called for an international boycott of the Russian film industry.

The Motion Picture Association said Monday that it "stands with the international community in upholding the rule of law and condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"On behalf of our member companies, who lead the film, TV and streaming industry, we express our strongest support for Ukraine's vibrant creative community who, like all people, deserve to live and work peacefully," the MPA said in a statement.

Russia is not a leading market for Hollywood, but the country typically ranks in the top dozen countries globally in box office. Sony's recent smash hit "Spider-Man: No Way Home," which has totaled $1.85 billion in ticket sales worldwide, has grossed $46.7 million in Russia. Sony's most recent chart-topping release, the Tom Holland adventure "Uncharted," has amassed about $20 million in Russia over the last two weeks.

Robert Pattinson helps a new Batman emerge from the darkness

By LINDSEY BAHR
AP FILM WRITER

Robert Pattinson isn't morally opposed to superhero films. But he wasn't exactly seeking them out before "The Batman" came along, either.

The 35-year-old who seemed to emerge as a fully formed superstar in mega franchises like "Harry Potter" and "Twilight" has for the past decade or so found himself chasing edgier fare, smaller movies with interesting directors and roles where he could stretch and disappear behind an archaic New England accent, as in "The Lighthouse," the unkempt beard of an explorer in "The Lost City of Z" or the shock of messily bleached hair that accompanies him on a never-ending chase in "Good Time," to name a few.

The strange thing is that it was "Good Time," a $2 million movie, and its frenetic, freefall energy that convinced director Matt Reeves that Pattinson needed to be his Batman. It was 2017 and Reeves, the man who brought freshness and grit to the last two "Planet of the Apes" films, had raised his hand to usher in a new iteration of the dark knight while Ben Affleck was in the process of hanging up his cape. Reeves started writing the movie for Pattinson, not having the faintest idea whether it would hold any interest.

Luckily, in Pattinson's mind, Batman preceded and existed outside of the "superhero craze." Growing up in England, he remembers watching the cartoon, the Adam West series (which he swears was still running replays in the UK when he was a child in the 1990s) and coveting his costume and Happy Meal toys. Then there were the films.

Sablan

"No other movie has been so thoroughly reinvented in so many different ways," Pattinson said. "Tonally, it's kind of they're not part of the same series. It exists as as a different kind of legacy."

The idea Reeves had was to go back to Batman's detective roots, crafting a 1970s style noir a la "Chinatown" or "The French Connection" meets classic "Warner Bros.' gangster pic" where Batman and Gordon hunt for a Zodiac-like killer who leaves riddles addressed to Batman at the crime scenes around Gotham.

"Not wanted to not reinvent the franchise, but in some ways, take it back to its origins, which is in mystery and detective work," said Jeffrey Wright, who plays Gordon. "He wanted to celebrate Batman as the world's greatest detective."

Reeves knew he couldn't do a straight origin story—the public has seen Martha Wayne's scattered pearls more than enough times—so he decided to drop the audience in a place where Bruce has only been Batman for a little over a year.

"You have to fulfill what people love about Batman," Reeves said. "You're going to have a Batmobile chase, you're going to have spectacle, fights, he's going to come out of the darkness in the suit... all of that is critical. But you have to do something that's fresh, too."

This hero version is more recluse than playboy and he's not spending his precious few off hours bodybuilding, either. Reeves said he saw him as a little out of control and a little "strung out," like an addict who goes out every night searching for street fights and sleeps during the day.

"We find him at a place where he's not yet perfected himself, declaring himself an agent of vengeance," Reeves said.

To play opposite Batman, Zoë Kravitz was cast as Selina Kyle, the femme fatale with a traumatic past who is on her way to becoming Catwoman. The chemistry between Pattinson and Kravitz, who are longtime friends, was "immediately apparent," Reeves said.

"I think they're very attracted to each other, and they also push each other's buttons," Kravitz said. "Both of them are people who have been alone for a very long time... it's scary for them to feel vulnerable or to care about somebody."

Wife shocked by husband's extracurricular activity

DEAR ABBY: I have been married 31 years. I recently found out my husband belongs to a singles group. The group meets once a week, and my husband never misses a meeting. I went with him to their most recent one and realized it was made up of mostly WOMEN. My husband knew all of them, particularly one named "Lauren," who he said he found interesting. I suspect that he is too interested in her.

Our marriage isn't great. Sex is infrequent because he has ED and does nothing about it. He's obsessed with his weight and works out four times a week. He's not a good communicator and has become secretive. I'm worried that he may have something going on with Lauren and I'm very anxious about it. I don't know what to do. Please advise. We have gone to marriage counseling but it didn't help.

SURPRISED, BUT NOT SURPRISED

DEAR SURPRISED: That a married man would join a singles group is galling. The purpose of singles groups is for ELIGIBLE individuals to meet each other. That this was hidden from you until recently isn't a good sign, but consider yourself lucky you were able to attend that meeting.

Contact your physician and ask to be screened for STDs in case your husband has "discovered" Viagra since joining the singles group. Because he isn't using an erection enhancer with you doesn't mean he may not have been using it with someone else—Lauren, for instance.

Protect yourself and your financial interests. Consult an attorney and a CPA to establish what and where the marital assets are, and what you are entitled to in case of a divorce. The CPA can help with that if it becomes necessary. Then ask your husband what he expects from socializing with single women and whether he wants to stay married. You have my sympathy.

■■■■

DEAR ABBY: I've been dating "Karl" a little over a year. Our relationship has been on and off because I haven't been happy with him. Every time we break up, Karl seems to have a way of pulling me right back in.

I'm divorced; he's legally separated. He works about 18 hours a day at two jobs, and I get to see him only one day a week. Karl's kids want nothing to do with me, or with him, for that matter. Now for the fourth time, and against my better judgment, I've given him another chance. Guess what? I am right back where we were before.

What's wrong with me? Karl is not a bad guy. He would bend over backward for me. The problem is I am not IN love with him. I feel like I'm stuck in a dead-end relationship. How do I break up with him? It's hard to talk to him about anything because he's always at work.

SAME OLD, SAME OLD

DEAR SAME: End the relationship by telling Karl you are not in love with him, you plan to date others and you don't want to see him again. It shouldn't come as a shock, in light of the fact that you have broken things off several times before. If he wants to see you after that, refuse and stick to it. Because his feelings for you are not reciprocated, it is kinder than stringing him along.

DEAR ABBY

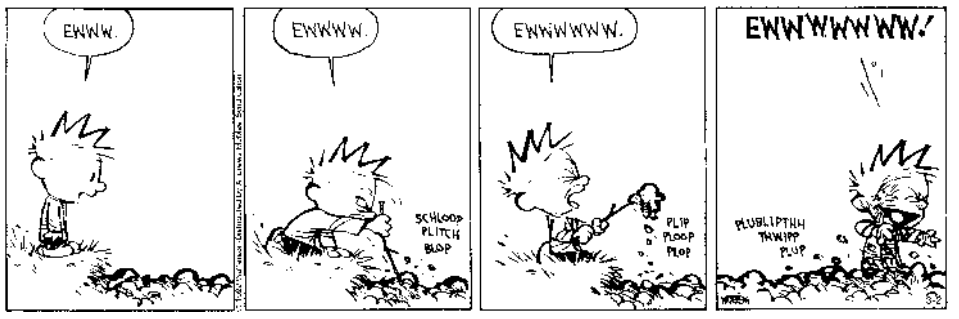
By Abigail Van Buren
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Pastimes

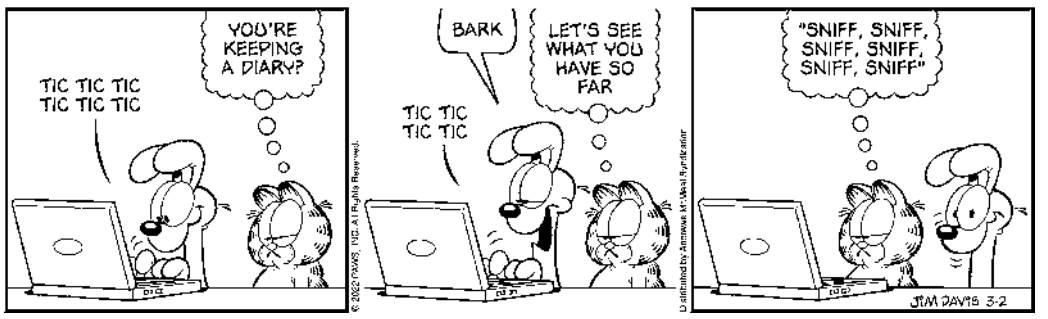
Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson



Garfield®

By Jim Davis


TIC TIC TIC TIC TIC TIC
YOU'RE KEEPING A DIARY?
BARK
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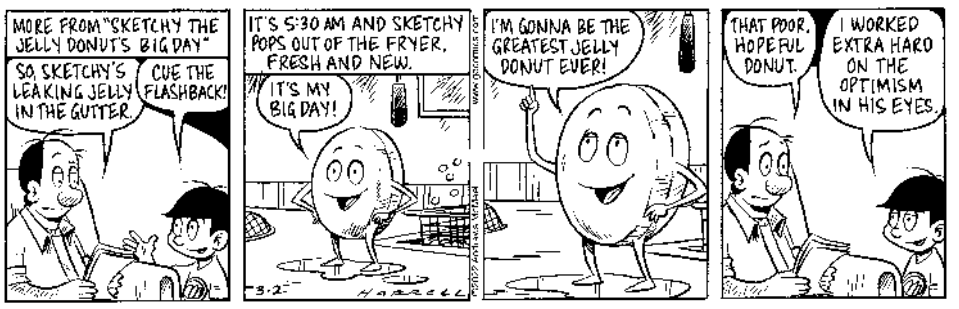
LET'S SEE WHAT YOU HAVE SO FAR
"SNIFF, SNIFF, SNIFF, SNIFF, SNIFF, SNIFF"
JIM DAVIS 3-2

Adam@home

By Bryan Basset


MORE FROM "SKETCHY THE JELLY DONUT'S BIG DAY"
SO SKETCHY'S LEAKING JELLY IN THE GUTTER.
CUE THE FLASHBACK!
IT'S 5:30 AM AND SKETCHY POPS OUT OF THE FRYER. FRESH AND NEW.
IT'S MY BIG DAY!
I'M GONNA BE THE GREATEST JELLY DONUT EVER!
THAT POOR, HOPEFUL DONUT.
I WORKED EXTRA HARD ON THE OPTIMISM IN HIS EYES.

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

THESE BEAUTY PAGEANT GIRLS SURE ARE PRETTY.
HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO MARRY MISS HERZEGOVINA?
YEAH, BOY! BUT I'D HATE TO HAVE TO SPELL A MAIDEN NAME LIKE HERZEGOVINA.

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

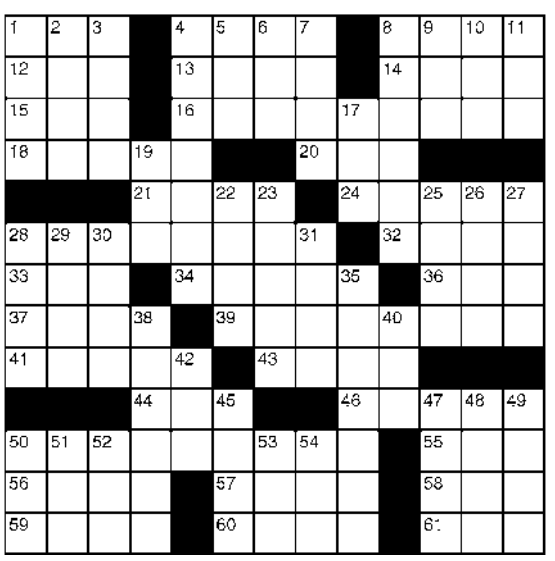
ACROSS
1 Greek vowel
4 Hot tubs
8 Work units
12 Computer acronym
13 Stallion-to-be
14 Not worth debating
15 Altar vow
16 Overcome
18 Vodka cocktail
20 Up to
21 Gymnast Korbut
24 Clear, as a windshield
28 Emergency warning
32 Stallion's mate
33 Previously
34 Comedian — Baron Cohen
36 Former Mideast gp.
37 Attire
39 Back wheel pin
41 Fess up
43 "Buenos —!"
44 Just out
46 Rachel Maddow's network
50 Farm locale
55 Acapulco gold
56 Miles away
57 Sitarist Shankar
58 Stannum
59 Theater award
60 Detail, briefly
61 Comics cry

DOWN
1 NYC Mayor — Adams
2 Commotion
3 Old Testament book
4 Dead Sea documents
5 Luau dish
6 Gore and Pacino
7 Undo a dele
8 Insignia
9 Kanga's kid
10 State VIP
11 Holy Fr. woman
17 Help
19 Extinct bird
22 Paraphernalia
23 Rainbow-shaped
25 Ersatz
26 Verbal
27 Richard of "Chicago"
28 Sitarist's music
29 "Zounds!"
30 Campus digs
31 Popular Asian cuisine
35 Semitic language
38 Like some stars
40 Donkey
42 Business card no.
45 Major conflicts
47 Memorandum
48 French cheese
49 Hit on the noggin
50 Snitch
51 ET's craft
52 Scooted
53 Knock
54 Night before

Solution time: 23 mins.

T	A	L	C		G	A	W	K		S	H	E
A	G	A	S		O	M	A	R		T	E	T
P	O	W	E	R	B	A	S	E		A	A	S
			P	O	S	I		M	E	R	R	Y
S	E	W	E	D			S	L	A	P		
N	C	I	S		M	A	N	I	T	O	B	A
U	R	I		A	I	D	A	N		W	O	N
B	U	L	L	F	R	O	G		W	E	S	T
			P	O	H	E		M	E	R	C	I
K	Y	O	T	O		G	L	A	D			
L	O	W		P	O	W	E	R	G	R	A	B
U	K	E		O	R	E	O		E	U	R	O
M	E	N		P	E	K	N		S	E	A	T

Yesterday's answer 3-2



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Bryce Dallas Howard, 41; Method Man, 51; Daniel Craig, 54; Jon Bon Jovi, 60.

Happy Birthday: It's OK to dream big. Put your energy to good use. Be open to suggestions and willing to pull in experts when necessary. Plan your course and pursue your goals. The only regret you'll have is not following through with your plans. Thoughts followed by actions will help you accomplish something that makes you proud. Strive to honor the promises you make to yourself. Your numbers are 8, 14, 21, 29, 34, 43, 48.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19):* Use your power of persuasion to your advantage. Preparation, accuracy and compromise will help you get your way. Don't take a risk regarding your health, position or reputation. Have a foolproof plan in place and a backup for the unexpected. ✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* You can knock whatever you set out to do out of the ballpark. Any changes you want to make or pursue will occur if you take physical action. Step up and do your best. A material change will lift your spirits. ✪✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* Be reasonable, and expect the same from others. Don't be afraid to do your own thing and let others do as they please. Being true to yourself may not be easy, but it is necessary if you want to get ahead. ✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* Put what you know to good use. You will drum up interest in what you are doing. Set high goals, come up with unique ideas and plans, and share what you have to offer with people who have something to contribute. ✪✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22):* Keep life simple, your plans doable and those who like to disrupt at a distance. By keeping the peace and executing your projects strategically, you will overcome any outside force you face along the way. Handle colleagues carefully. ✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22):* You'll choose innovative ideas and people who offer a different perspective on life. Get moving, and you'll accomplish what you set out to do. Networking events that require physical action on your part will help drum up support. ✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* Use intelligence if you want to get things done. Problems with someone you deal with will leave you in an awkward position if you can't agree. For best results, give others the same freedom you want in return. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* You won't have to stand alone if you do your part. Words won't matter if you don't follow through. You can take a unique approach and achieve excellent results. Make change work for you. ✪✪✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* Stick to your plan, regardless of what others pursue. A steady pace and a well-thought-out strategy will pay off. Trust in your instincts, not what someone is peddling. Discipline and understanding will get you where you want to go. ✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19):* Make a couple of minor adjustments to how you do things and you'll have everything you want. Be adventurous and share your thoughts and feelings with someone you love, and exciting plans you can look forward to will develop. ✪✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18):* Sit tight and work on presentation and promotion. You'll know when you are ready to launch, but keep improving and updating what you are trying to achieve until that time. Too much too fast will be your downfall. ✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* Take what others say in stride. Check what's doable and what isn't. Proceed with passion, and use the power of persuasion to bring about the changes that will help you seize the moment and achieve what you set out to do. ✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are convincing, innovative and unique. You are unpredictable and captivating.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

	6	8				2	7	
2			7		3			1
			2		8			4
			1		4			7
		1			5			8
	3				7			6
9					6			2
8					2			9
4	7	2	5			1	6	

Difficulty Level ★★★ 3/02

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

9	1	8	2	6	4	7	5	3
6	7	4	8	5	3	9	2	1
3	2	5	1	7	9	4	6	8
5	3	9	7	4	8	6	1	2
2	6	7	5	3	1	8	4	9
4	8	1	9	2	6	3	7	5
1	4	6	3	9	2	5	8	7
7	9	2	6	8	5	1	3	4
8	5	3	4	1	7	2	9	6

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

SEAMLESS (FOOD DELIVERY APP) Solution: 8 letters

T	E	E	S	W	O	R	B	E	C	I	V	R	E	S
N	N	L	T	A	K	E	O	U	T	H	C	N	U	L
U	I	A	I	T	A	B	L	E	T	O	I	C	R	A
O	L	D	R	B	D	M	B	U	R	G	M	E	H	I
C	N	D	S	U	O	E	T	S	O	C	T	E	C	C
C	O	R	R	R	A	M	L	L	E	A	S	Y	R	E
A	L	E	E	B	E	T	P	I	C	K	U	P	A	P
M	A	S	S	N	R	N	S	A	V	D	I	N	E	S
O	U	S	U	E	T	E	N	E	L	E	C	A	S	H
U	T	T	T	I	R	D	A	I	R	G	R	O	U	P
N	R	L	M	E	O	L	A	K	D	E	R	Y	I	S
T	I	E	C	O	A	M	N	G	F	D	E	A	L	R
F	V	I	F	E	E	T	A	R	T	A	G	S	L	A
S	P	A	M	F	S	G	N	I	V	A	S	P	I	T
E	P	H	O	T	O	P	T	I	O	N	S	T	B	S

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Account, Address, Amount, Bill, Breakfast, Browse, Cash, Cater, Cost, Deal, Delivery, Dine, Dinner, Easy, Email, Filter, Food, Group, Grub, Login, Lunch, Maps, Meal, Member, Menu, Mobile, Offer, Online, Options, Photo, Pickup, Rate, Recipe, Remote, Restaurant, Savings, Search, Service, Specials, Stars, Tablet, Tags, Takeout, Time, Tips, Users, Virtual

Yesterday's Answer: Decoration

Treasuries 27, 29, 31 and 33 through 47 can be purchased online at www.WonderWordBooks.com.

Vincent scores 20, Heat remain hot by topping Bulls, 112-99

MIAMI (AP)—For the first time all season, the Miami Heat have a bit of a cushion atop the Eastern Conference.

Gabe Vincent and Tyler Herro each scored 20 points, and the Heat topped the Chicago Bulls 112-99 on Monday night for their ninth win in their last 10 games. The Heat moved a season-best two games clear of the second-place Bulls in the East.

"Whatever people want to say about us is cool," Herro said.

Jimmy Butler and Bam Adebayo each had 15 points for Miami. Max Strus had all 13 of his points in the fourth quarter for the Heat.

Chicago guard DeMar DeRozan's streak of 10 consecutive games with at least 30 points ended; he finished with 18.

"I was just playing," DeRozan said of the streak. "Just going out there playing, competing, doing whatever I could. I was just going out there playing. ... I'm glad it's over with so I can stop hearing everything about it."

Zach LaVine led the Bulls with 22 points, while Ayo Dosunmu had 18 and Nikola Vucevic added 14 for Chicago.

The Heat are now 3-0 against Chicago, ensuring Miami would hold a head-to-head tiebreaker over the Bulls if one is needed to determine seeding. The Heat led most of the way, building as much as a 24-point cushion.

Chicago has the sixth-best record in the NBA, but is now 1-8 against the five teams with better marks — Phoenix, Golden State, Memphis, Utah and Miami. The win was against the Jazz in October.

"I think the biggest thing for me is we have to get battle-tested in some of these games and we just don't have a lot of guys who have gone into these kind of experiences," Bulls coach Billy Donovan said. "I think it's really good for us."

Vincent, starting for Miami in place of Kyle Lowry — out for personal reasons — was 7 for 13 from the field, 4 of 8 from 3-point range.

AP

Miami Heat guard Gabe Vincent (2) and forward Caleb Martin (16) pressure Chicago Bulls center DeMar DeRozan (11) during the first half of an NBA basketball game Monday, Feb. 28, 2022, in Miami.

"When the opportunity comes you want to take advantage of it," Vincent said. "We miss Kyle and can't wait to get him back."

The Bulls missed 14 of their first 15 3s before Dosunmu made one from the right corner early in the third quarter, getting Chicago within 65-51. But the Bulls never made a serious run in the second half, and Miami wasn't threatened in the fourth.

Miami outscored Chicago 36-21 in the third, pushing its lead to 24 points going into the final 12 minutes. It matched the third-largest deficit for the Bulls after three quarters this season, plus it was the fifth-largest advantage for the Heat at that point in a game this season.

Chicago will take advantage of a couple days in Miami, with the team not scheduled to leave for Atlanta until Wednesday afternoon. DeRozan's streak of 30-point games ended one shy of matching Michael Jordan's franchise record of 11 in a row. There have been 29 instances of a Bulls player scoring 30 points in at least five consecutive regular-season games; DeRozan is now responsible for one of those streaks, Jordan for the other 28.

Raptors 133, Nets 97

In Brooklyn, Scottie Barnes made his first 11 shots and had 28 points and a season-high 16 rebounds, leading visiting Toronto over Brooklyn in the opener of a home-and-home series.

Blown out by Charlotte and Atlanta in their first two games after the All-Star break, the Raptors were on the good side of a romp against a Nets team that was missing their best players, their coach and apparently anyone who could guard Barnes.

The forward was 10 for 10 at halftime, the first rookie to be perfect on 10 or more shots in a half since Derrick Rose on March 18, 2009, according to the Elias Sports Bureau. The Nets finally stopped the No. 4 pick when James Johnson blocked his shot with 7:08 left in the third quarter.

By then, Barnes was on the way to matching his highest-scoring game on a night Toronto led by as many as 39 points.

The teams play again Tuesday in Toronto, which the Nets hope will be their last game without Kevin Durant, who is expected to return soon after missing the last 20 games with a sprained left knee ligament. Kyrie Irving and Ben Simmons were also out for the Nets, and Coach Steve Nash was placed in health and safety protocols shortly before the game. Assistant Jacque Vaughn ran the team in his place.

Magic 119, Pacers 103

In Orlando, Wendell Carter Jr. had 21 points and 12 rebounds and eight Orlando players scored in double figures as the Magic beat visiting Indiana.

Mo Bamba and Franz Wagner had 15 points apiece for Orlando.

The game marked the return of Magic guard Markelle Fultz, who tore his left ACL almost 14 months ago. Fultz had 10 points and six assists in 16 minutes, leaving the game with the Magic up by 16 points in the middle of the fourth quarter.

Tyrese Haliburton had 23 points and seven assists for the Pacers, and Buddy Hield added 18 points.

Bucks 130, Hornets 106

In Milwaukee, Giannis Antetokounmpo had 26 points and 16 rebounds and host Milwaukee scored a season-high 44 points in the second quarter to beat Charlotte.

Jrue Holiday had 21 points and eight assists, and Bobby Portis added 20 points and 10 rebounds for the Bucks, who were coming off a loss to the Brooklyn Nets on Saturday.

LaMelo Ball scored 24 points to lead Charlotte.

Timberwolves 127, Cavaliers 122

In Cleveland Karl-Anthony Towns hit a 3-pointer – on the same floor where he won the 3-point contest during NBA All-Star Weekend – with 11.8 seconds left and Minnesota won at Cleveland.

Towns' first 3 of the game helped the Timberwolves hang on after blowing a 23-point third-quarter lead. One of the league's best outside shooters, the 7-footer became the first center to win the 3-point contest, defeating seven guards.

D'Angelo Russell scored 25 points and Towns had 17 as Minnesota handed Cleveland its first home loss in nearly two months.

Kevin Love led the Cavaliers with 26 points and Jarrett Allen had 21.

Grizzlies 118, Spurs 105

In Memphis, Ja Morant threw down a massive dunk over 7-footer Jakob Poeltl and scored a career-high 52 points, lifting Memphis to a win at home.

The arena was still buzzing from Morant's fast-break slam late in the second quarter when Steven Adams delivered a length-of-the-court pass to Morant, who knocked down a buzzer-beater from the left baseline for a 68-58 halftime lead.

Morant added 13 consecutive points during the fourth quarter to break the game open, following up a career-best 46 points in a win Saturday at Chicago by connecting on 22 of 30 from the field. He hit all four 3-point tries as Memphis won its second straight.

Morant's performance was the first 50-point game in Grizzlies franchise history.

Kings 131, Thundeer 110

In Oklahoma City, DeAaron Fox had 29 points and 10 assists, and visiting Sacramento rolled past Oklahoma City.

Trey Lyles scored 24 points and Harrison Barnes scored 23 for the Kings, who snapped a four-game losing streak. Domantas Sabonis added 14 points, 16 rebounds and seven assists.

Oklahoma City's Shai Gilgeous-Alexander had his third consecutive game with at least 30 points since returning from a sprained right ankle, scoring 37 points and dishing out 10 assists.

Galloway, ex-NBA star Johnson lead US over Mexico in rematch

WASHINGTON (AP)—Even without a roster full of current NBA stars, the United States breezed through this World Cup qualifying window.

It hasn't always been that easy.

Langston Galloway scored 16 points and former pro standout Joe Johnson added 14 to lift the U.S. to an 89-67 win over Mexico on Sunday in qualifying for next year's World Cup. The Americans avenged their lone loss of this qualifying round, routing the previously unbeaten Mexican team in a game that wasn't close after the first few minutes.

The U.S. led 48-21 at halftime.

"We started this camp with Mexico on our heart. They humbled us in Mexico, and we were ready to play against them," coach Jim Boylen said. "They beat us from the 3-point line down there, and they beat us bad, and so I have to give our guys credit. They came prepared."

With the NBA season taking place at the same time as these qualifying games, most of the U.S. players came from the G League. Still, all the Americans (3-1) need to do is avoid finishing last in their four-team group to advance to the next round of qualifying. They would be assured of that if Puerto Rico beats Cuba later Sunday.

During the first qualifying window — at Mexico in November — the U.S. beat Cuba by five and lost 97-88 to Mexico. The American roster changed significantly for this window, and the U.S. won both games in Washington comfortably. The Americans beat Puerto Rico 93-76 on Thursday night. The next qualifying window is in July.

"The first window was very difficult. Cuba gave us a heck of a game. We were down in the last five minutes," Boylen said. "I thought Mexico, the last time we played them, was more physical than us, tougher than us. They shot the ball at an unbelievable rate."

The 40-year-old Johnson, a seven-time NBA All-Star, is the biggest name on this U.S. team. Galloway also has a good amount of NBA experience. David Stockton, whose Hall of Fame father John was in attendance Sunday, scored 15 points.

"I was looking forward to the opportunity," said Galloway, a 30-year-old guard who has played for seven NBA teams, most recently the Bucks and Nets this season. "I was fortunate enough to be in the G League, to be able to play in this situation. This opportunity doesn't come around that often, so it was truly a blessing for me."

Mexico (3-1) never led in the rematch against the U.S. The Americans went on a 14-0 run spanning the end of the first quarter and start of the second, taking a 33-14 lead.

Fabian Jaimes led Mexico with 11 points.

"It was the first half. We came out flat in the first half," Mexico coach Omar Quintero said. "We gave a lot of easy looks for them."

MLB labor talks go past midnight amid opening day deadline

JUPITER, Fla. (AP)— Locked-out players and Major League Baseball engaged in a series of intense meetings that stretched into early Tuesday morning as they attempted to forge the path to a labor deal before management's deadline for salvaging opening day on March 31.

The sides met nearly a dozen times Monday, and negotiations carried on past midnight as the lockout reached its 90th day. They made progress toward an agreement but remained very far apart on key issues.

Commissioner Rob Manfred met with the union twice — once more than he had previously since the lockout started Dec. 2. After months of talks in fits and starts, the sides shifted into possible deal-making mode.

"We're working at it,'" Manfred said around 6 p.m. after his second session of the day with the union.

Deputy commissioner Dan Halem and executive vice president Morgan Sword were key figures in the meetings, including for a series of brief sessions that also included senior vice president Pat Houlihan late Monday.

Negotiations went into a ninth straight day after the league and players met just six times on core economics during the first 2 1/2 months of the lockout. They have laid out their positions to each other in detail, both agreeing to funnel more money to young players but entering the day far apart on many economic terms.

AP

Representatives from Major League Baseball walk to labor negotiations with the players' association, Monday, Feb. 28, 2022, at Roger Dean Stadium in Jupiter, Fla.

Manfred said a deal had to be reached by Monday to maintain four weeks of spring training ahead of a 162-game schedule. MLB has not fixed an exact time to the deadline, which led to the possibility of bargaining sessions stretching into the wee hours if both sides sensed an agreement within reach.

The union has not said whether it agrees with the deadline, and baseball has shortened spring training to as few as three weeks in the past.

Emotions became more heated as the sides pressed for each other's bottom line. Philadelphia star Bryce Harper posted a photo on Instagram altered to show him in a Japanese baseball uniform with the words: "Yomiuri Giants you up? Got some time to kill."

Yankees pitcher Jameson Taillon, who attended negotiations last week, tweeted: "Players are used to their 'threats.' Owners actions have made it clear all along that they have a set # of games where they still make profits/get TV money. They don't want to play. It's sad that these are the guys who drive the direction and 'future' of our amazing sport."

The sides arrived at 10 a.m., three hours earlier than previous days, at Roger Dean Stadium, the vacant spring training home of the Miami Marlins and St. Louis Cardinals.

Mets pitcher Max Scherzer and free agent reliever Andrew Miler were the only players on hand. Halem, Sword and Colorado Rockies CEO Dick Monfort also took part in the talks.

Players would lose $20.5 million in salary for each day of the season that is canceled, according to a study by The Associated Press, and the 30 teams would lose large sums that are harder to pin down.

Spring training games were to have begun Saturday, but baseball's ninth work stoppage — and first since 1995 — already has led to exhibitions being canceled through March 7.

The most contentious proposals in dispute involve luxury tax thresholds and rates, the size of a new bonus pool for pre-arbitration players, minimum salaries, salary arbitration eligibility and the union's desire to change the club revenue-sharing formula.

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Philadelphia	34	22	.607	—
Boston	33	25	.569	2
Toronto	31	25	.554	3
Brooklyn	30	27	.526	4½
New York	25	33	.431	10

Southeast Division

Miami	37	20	.649	—
Charlotte	29	29	.500	8½
Atlanta	26	30	.464	10½
Washington	26	30	.464	10½
Orlando	13	46	.220	25

Central Division

Chicago	37	21	.638	—
Cleveland	35	22	.614	1½
Milwaukee	35	23	.603	2
Indiana	19	39	.328	18
Detroit	12	45	.211	24½

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division

Memphis	40	18	.690	—
Dallas	33	24	.579	6½
New Orleans	23	34	.404	16½
San Antonio	22	36	.379	18
Houston	15	41	.268	24

Northwest Division

Utah	36	21	.632	—
Denver	32	25	.561	4
Minnesota	30	27	.526	6
Portland	24	34	.414	12½
Oklahoma City	18	39	.316	18

Pacific Division

Phoenix	46	10	.821	—
Golden State	42	16	.724	5
L.A. Clippers	29	30	.492	18½
L.A. Lakers	26	31	.456	20½
Sacramento	22	37	.373	25½

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CUKI

From Page 20

Marie, for allowing him to race and spending their hard-earned cash to buy bikes.

In the Novice Class, Ethan Yumul was victorious with 47 points followed by Aric Cruz and Joseph Santos with 42 pints and 37 points, respectively.

Bentley Koshiro scored a perfect 50 in the Peewee I Class after winning both heats. Roseha Untalan with 44 points and Ryan Borja with 40 points complete the Top 3.

In the Peewee II Class, Conan Iakopo took the cake with also a perfect run of 50 points. Keenon Togawa was second with 44 points, followed by Kaleb Reyes with 40 points.

JERICHO

From Page 20

blessed with two children, Pristine Althea and Krader Matteo.

Cruz, who represented the CNMI in the 2006 Micronesian Games on Saipan and the same edition of the quadrennial event in Palau in 2010, said leaving NLEX was one of the hardest decisions of his professional basketball career.

"It's really difficult to leave NLEX and coach Yeng [Guaio]. He's the guy that built my name up in the PBA. Actually, both of them (Austria and Guaio) are my father-figures. They're my godfathers in my wedding. Leaving NLEX was very hard and leaving my teammates out there, but you just have to do what's best for your family. We're not getting any younger, you know what I'm saying?"

At San Miguel, the former Garapan Rollers player will be joining a crowded backcourt that includes former Gilas players C.J. Perez, Terrence Romeo, Chris Ross, and Marcio Lassiter as well as Simon Enciso. He, however, is unperturbed when it comes to playing time.

"I'm not looking into that. When I go to a practice I go to work. I'm just gonna do me, you know. If coach Leo puts me in, I'll work my heart out, but if he doesn't put me in I'll just contribute, you know, by cheering the team. Always positive vibes from me. I don't have to compete with anyone, you know what I'm saying… I have three years there so I have a lot of time."

Immediately after signing his fresh three-year deal, Cruz joined his new teammates at practice where he was welcome with open arms.

"Today was actually my first practice and they've been so nice so far. I talked to a lot of guys. I was talking to Marcio and Chris and I told them 'You know what since I've been here in the PBA I've been going to war against you guys and I didn't like it, but now I'm with you guys I can't wait to go to war with you.'"

Cruz wanted to wear the No. 9 jersey at San Miguel but eventually decided not to after learning that "The Skywalker" Samboy Lim used to wear the number.

"That's a legend right there," he said.

From the Garapan Basketball Court to stardom in the PBA, Cruz shared this bit of advice to those who want to follow his footsteps:" To the players back home who want to make it to the pros someday not only in the Philippines, but in New Zealand, Australia, or in Europe just keep working hard and keep following your dreams and don't ever, ever give up and don't let anyone tell you what you can and you can't do. Just be you and if you believe in something you have to go for it. That's been my mentality. If you have your goal just focus on it and one day it'll

LAKAY

From Page 20

country, the favored team only took a 2-point lead after 10 minutes of play, 21-19.

Lakay/Islander continued to toy with their food at the onset of the second quarter. With almost all their players missing from long range, Gravity 670 was more than happy to capitalize as the long rebounds led to breakaway layups on the other end. As a result, the little team that could managed to take a 39-38 lead at the half.

All would change though after the break, as Lakay/Islander finally asserted its might inside that led to easy baskets from 6-footers Zeric Gant and D.J. Ong and after three quarters of play they led by double digits, 60-50.

With the winning formula in hand, Lakay/Islander then cruised to victory in the payoff period with little to no resistance from Gravity 670.

Gant led Lakay/Islander in scoring with 24 points with Ong and Jet Jandoc adding 13 points apiece. Torres was the lone bright spot for Gravity 670 with a game-high 26 markers, which matched his jersey number.

In games last Friday, Royal Pacific edged IT&E, 54-50, in the first game. Blu Haus then wiped the floor clean of Super Tech in the second, 83-59, while Marianas Dental Clinic clobbered RNV Construction, 108-56, in the third game.

The day prior on Thursday, the CNMI National Men's Senior Basketball Team posing as Team Marianas made quick work of Paradise Realty, 87-55. Earlier, HBR Construction took advantage of 670 Gravity's endgame mistakes to win in a cliffhanger, 79-77.

Lakay/Islander 83 – Gant 24, Ong 13, Jandoc 13, Palacios 12, Capalad 8, Rabauliman 4, Natividad 4, Quan 4, Santos 1.

Gravity 670 68 – Torres 26, Tabora 12, Bernardo 11, Solis 11, Gaviola 4, Agustin 2, Alegre 2.

Scoring by quarters: 21-19, 39-38, 60-50, 83-68.

Win-win for NMI, Guam players

At the end of every game, there would be losers and winners. But that's not the case for the NMI national team's training camp in Guam, as the two islands considered the event as win-win for both programs of the Northern Mariana Islands Football Association and the Guam Football Association.

The two sides' national team pools made up of more than 100 players had eight training matches last week at the GFA National Training Center. The NMI team's women's crew won three games and had one draw, while the men's squad got one victory and three losses. Besides the training matches, the NMI players had practice sessions for five days and worked on their individual and teams' skills and developed and executed game strategies. Guam, on the other hand, was able to provide its players opportunities to compete—something that their teams have been wishing for since the program has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

"It's been two years since we had competition, so these training matches for both teams truly benefit both organizations. By getting back to the pitch, players will get to familiarize themselves again with how competitive matches work, with how their teammates play. We need more of these. We are hungry to play. The NMI will learn from playing here and we will learn from them as well," said GFA president Tino San Gil.

Sang Hoon Kim, GFA technical director and Guam Men's National Team head coach reflected on Guam's gains from the training matches, particularly for their upcoming men's national players.

"Congratulations to the U17 MNT players who made their first appearance for the senior national team. Some of the debutants are players who graduated from the GFA National Academy and were actually members of our youngest age group. The successful performances on the field are a testament of what full time, year-round training programs can achieve if they are permanent and supported by stakeholders," Kim said.

Kim's counterpart in the NMI—NMIFA technical director and men's head coach Michiteru Mita—sees his players having a better understanding on what it takes to level up with the teams in the region and having more motivation to get better and prove to themselves and to everyone that they could do it.

"Yes, the training camp just ended, but this is also the time to start working harder to further go to the next level. Using our experiences from the training camp will help us continue building and developing NMI football," Mita said.

Players Jireh Yobech and Pia Ngewakl said that the opportunity to play off-island is critical in their preparations to get back to either AFC or EAFF competitions. The training matches against Guam players allow them to assess their performance as an individual and as a team.

NMIFA president Jerry Tan acknowledged the NMI national team pool's relentless efforts in training at home despite the challenges brought about by the pandemic and the NMIFA leadership wanted to make sure the group will have the needed support to stay on track with the national team program.

"Our coaches and players have been working so hard for more than two years even during the pandemic and have received continued support from their clubs and parents. So, it is very important that the NMIFA do its best to help the national players and teams while they wait for international competitions to resume," said Tan.

The NMIFA president also thanked the GFA for the strong partnership that has been instrumental in the development of the NMI national program. ***(PR)***

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

NMI Women's U18 National Team players do warm-up jogs for their training session last week during the training camp at the Guam Football Association National Training Center.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

NMI Men's U20 National Team players perform warm-up exercises for their training session last week during the training camp at the Guam Football Association National Training Center.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The NMI's Summer Manahane steps in on defense to steal possession from a Guam player during their friendly match at the Guam Football Association National Training Center last week.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The NMI's Markus Toves, right, tries to dribble past a Guam defender during their friendly match at the Guam Football Association National Training Center last week.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

NMI players and officials pose for a group photo after winning their final friendly game against Guam last week at the Guam Football Association National Training Center.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

NMI Women's U18 National Team goalkeeper Dehesa Mendiola rolls the ball back to coach Angie Ito after a save during a warm-up drill.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

NMI Women's National Team players celebrate in front of their supporters who flew in from Saipan after beating the Guam Masakada, 1-0, in their friendly game last week at the Guam Football Association National Training Center.

Vincent scores 20, Heat remain hot by topping Bulls 112-99

PAGE 17

Saipan Tribune
Sports

Win-win for NMI, Guam players

PAGE 19

Jericho signs with winningest PBA team

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

The CNMI's very own Jericho Cruz has signed with the San Miguel Beermen of the Philippine Basketball Association, a move that reunites him with his old college coach at Adamson University, Leo Austria.

Cruz, whose contract with the NLEX Road Warriors expired last Feb. 28, said aside from loyalty to Austria he also signed with the winningest team in Asia's first pay-for-play league with 25 championships because of job security and family. In fact, he said before he signed a three-year deal with the flagship franchise of the SMC Group, the 31-year-old Marianas High School alumnus had offers from two B. League teams.

"First of all it has to do with coach Leo. You know we've been through a lot since our college days. He's the one who groomed me where am I right now. I just want to give back by playing for him once again, especially for San Miguel—a great, great team."

On the two offers from Japan, the mainstay of the Guam National Men's Basketball Team said he chose the PBA and San Miguel because ultimately he didn't want to leave the Philippines.

" I got two offers from Japan's B. League, but I just didn't want to do it because the offer was just one year, two years…it's not stable and I have to leave my family out here. I can't do that you know because I love my kids so much I can't live without them."

Cruz is married to Mosh Cruz and the two have been

See JERICHO on **Page 18**

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Jericho Cruz, right, shakes hands with San Miguel Corp. sports director Alfrancis Chua after signing a three-year deal to join the San Miguel Beermen in the Philippine Basketball Association at the SMC head offices in Ortigas.

Cuki repeats in Veterans Class

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Cuki Alvarez made it two in a row after winning the Veterans Class of the 2022 Monster Energy Point Series Race last Sunday at the Cowtown Race Track.

The 51-year-old boat captain again edged 2021 series champion and practice partner Dave Celis in the February race, 47 points to 45 points. Alvarez took the checkered flag in the first heat, while Celis was first in the second heat. Unfortunately for the latter, he wound up only third in the first heat that had eventual third place Champi Villacanes finishing runner-up

Aboard his trusty Kawasaki KX450F, Alvarez is thanking his lucky stars for again emerging on top against a savvy field of riders in the Marianas Racing Association-organized monthly race.

"The Veteran Class is very competitive! Don't let their ages fool you. We wanna show all these young guys that we have speed too! But yeah, I was able to get the overall win for the day with a 1-2 placing. I edged out Dave Celis for the win because he got a 3-1. Champi Villacanes got third with a 2-3," he said.

The owner of Trench Tech Gym, who also finished second in the Expert Class, said it was touch and go for a while in their division.

"In the first heat, Champi led half the race and I had to pressure him to make a mistake in order to get by him. Then he kept me honest the rest of the race and stayed close by. Then in heat 2, Dave Celis got the hole shot and we battled for all six laps passing each other back and forth! But on the last lap, he rode strong and I couldn't get around him so I had to settle for second place. But I knew I would eventually win the overall, so I was OK with second place in heat 2," he said.

Alvarez thanked Cycles Plus Guam, Trench Tech RACE Team, Roil Soil Clothing, IT&E, and last but not the least his wife/accountant,

See CUKI on **Page 18**

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Cuki Alvarez, seen here in this file photo, topped the Veterans Class of the 2022 Monster Energy Point Series Race last Sunday at the Cowtown Race Track.

Lakay shakes off 670 Gravity in Lion's caging

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Lakay/Islander crushed a pesky Gravity 670 team, 83-68, in the lone open division game of the Inaugural SCLC Basketball League last Saturday at the Gillette Multi-Purpose Gymnasium in Gualo Rai.

The win leveled the team's win-loss card at 1-1 following its loss to The Game in the opener. The loss, meanwhile, was the second in as many outings for the young Gravity 67 crew.

Despite taller and heftier than their opponents, Lakay/Islander actually struggled in the first half of the contest. With Joseph Torres making hay while the sun shined from rainbow

See LAKAY on **Page 18**

MARK RABAGP

Lakay/Islander center Zeric Gant outjumps a Gravity 670 player on this fastbreak play in their open division matchup in the Inaugural SCLC Basketball League last Saturday at the Gillette Multi-Purpose Gymnasium in Gualo Rai.